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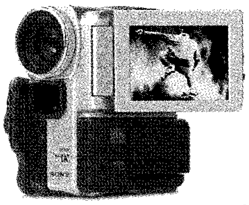

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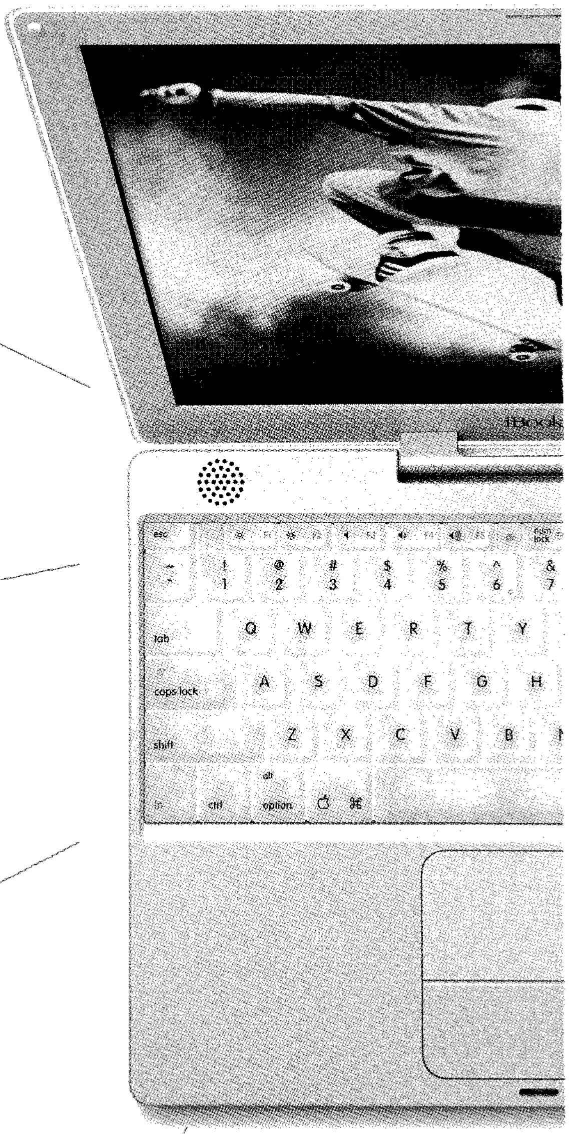

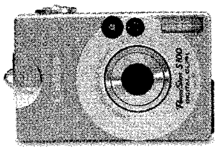

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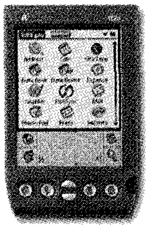

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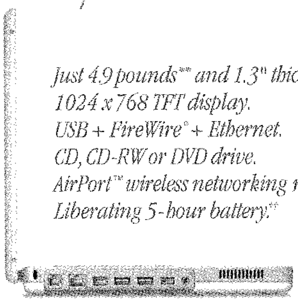

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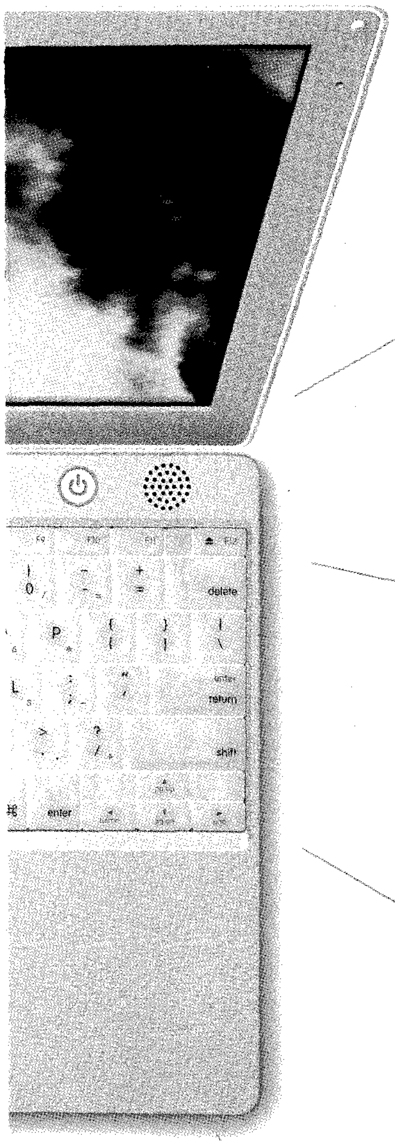

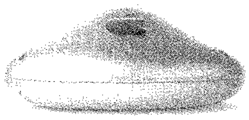

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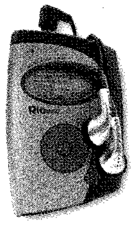

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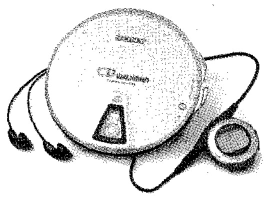

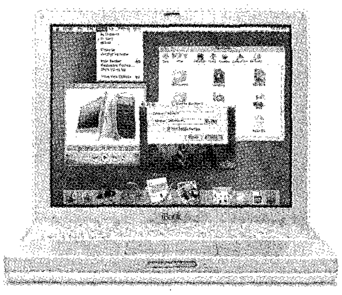

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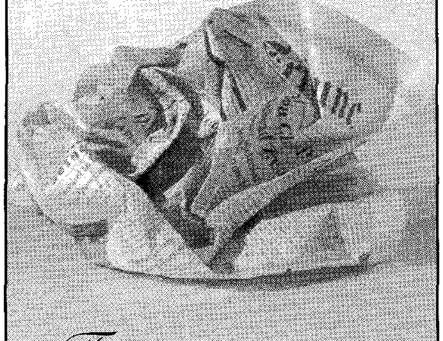

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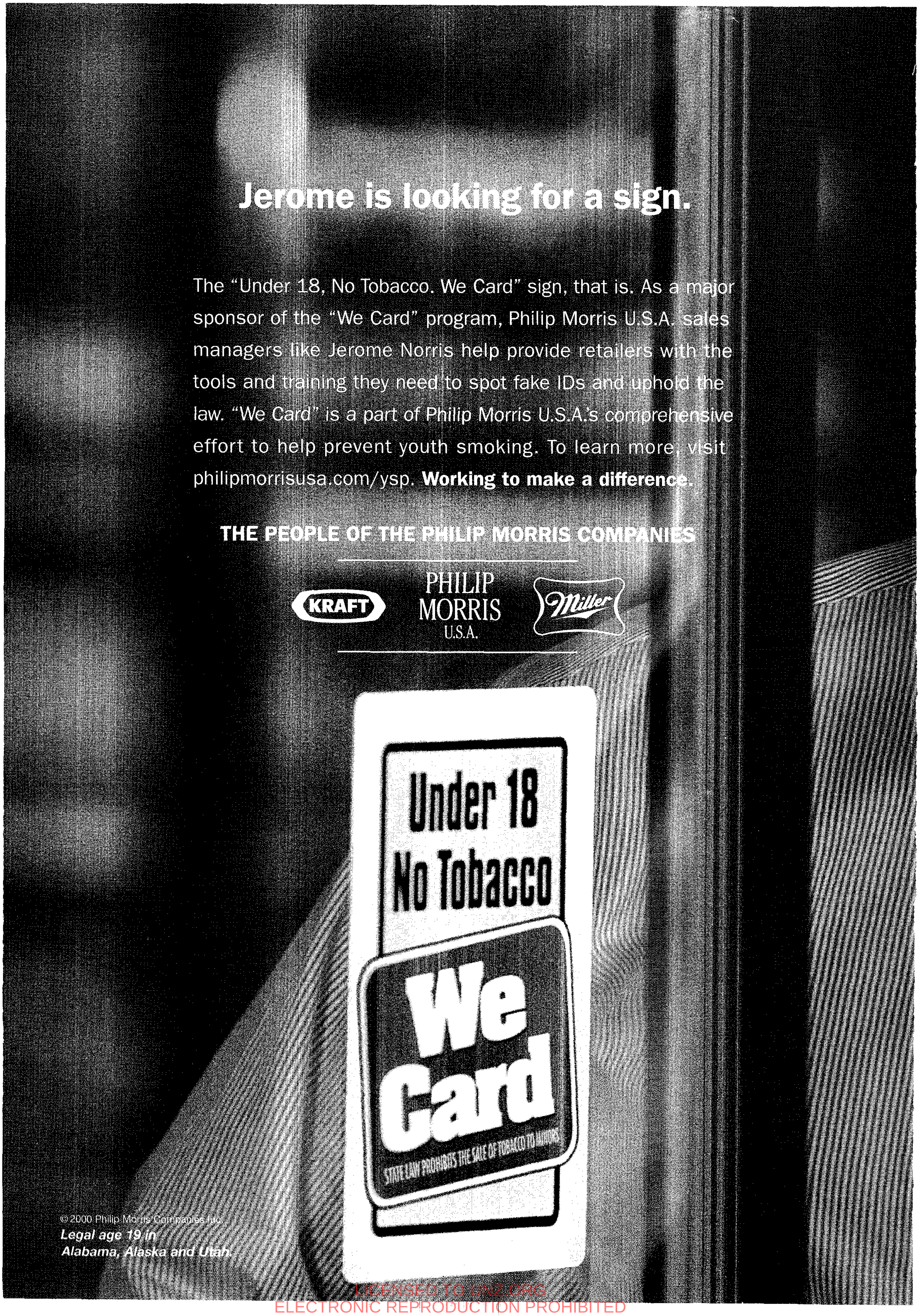
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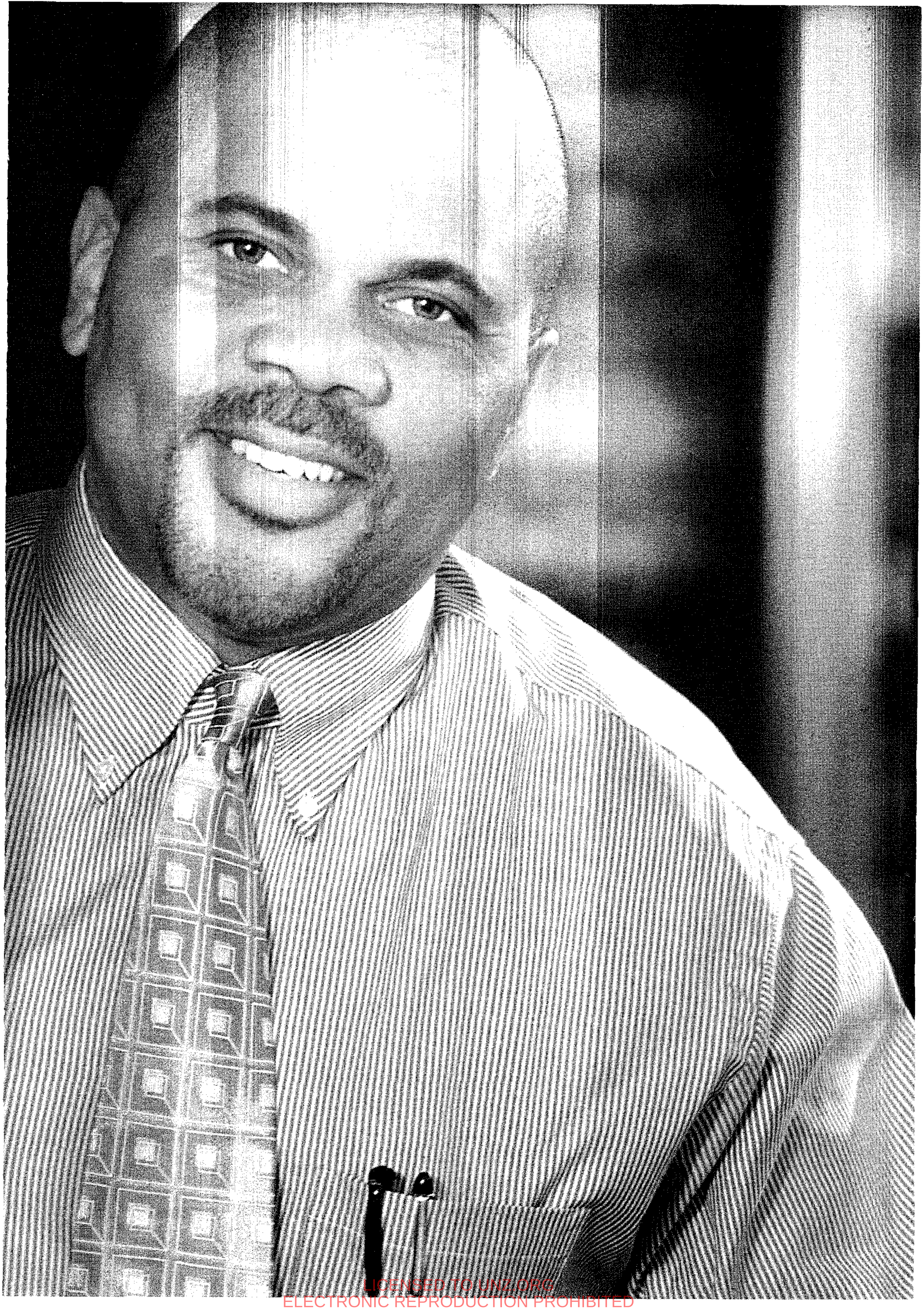

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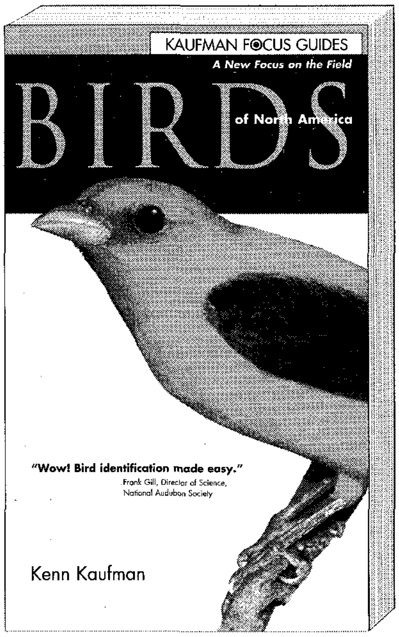
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Malcolm Gladwell ("Wrong Turn," p. 50), a staff writer, won a National Magazine Award this year for his profile of Ron Popeil, "The Pitchman," which appeared in our October 30th issue.

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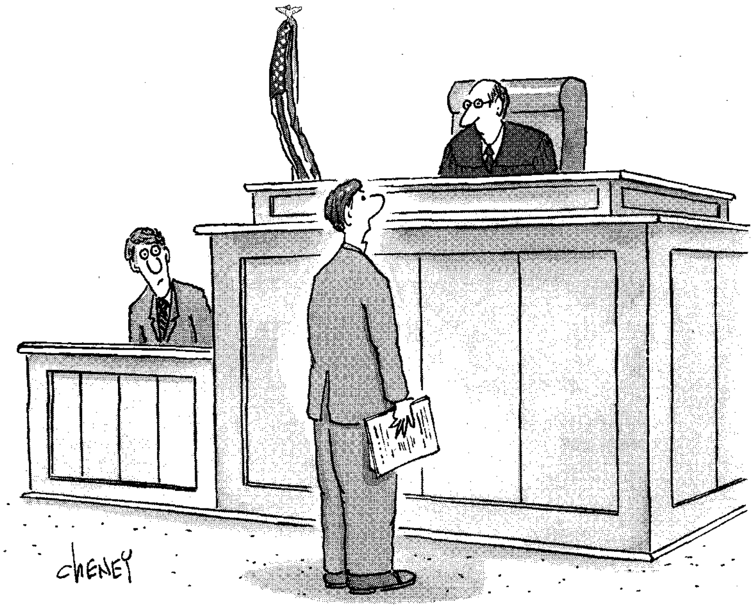
Tom Tomorrow (The Back Page, p. 96) is the creator of the syndicated cartoon "This Modern World." His most recent book is "When Penguins Attack!" ♦



"If it pleases the Court, Your Honor, I'd like to quit the defense and join the prosecution."

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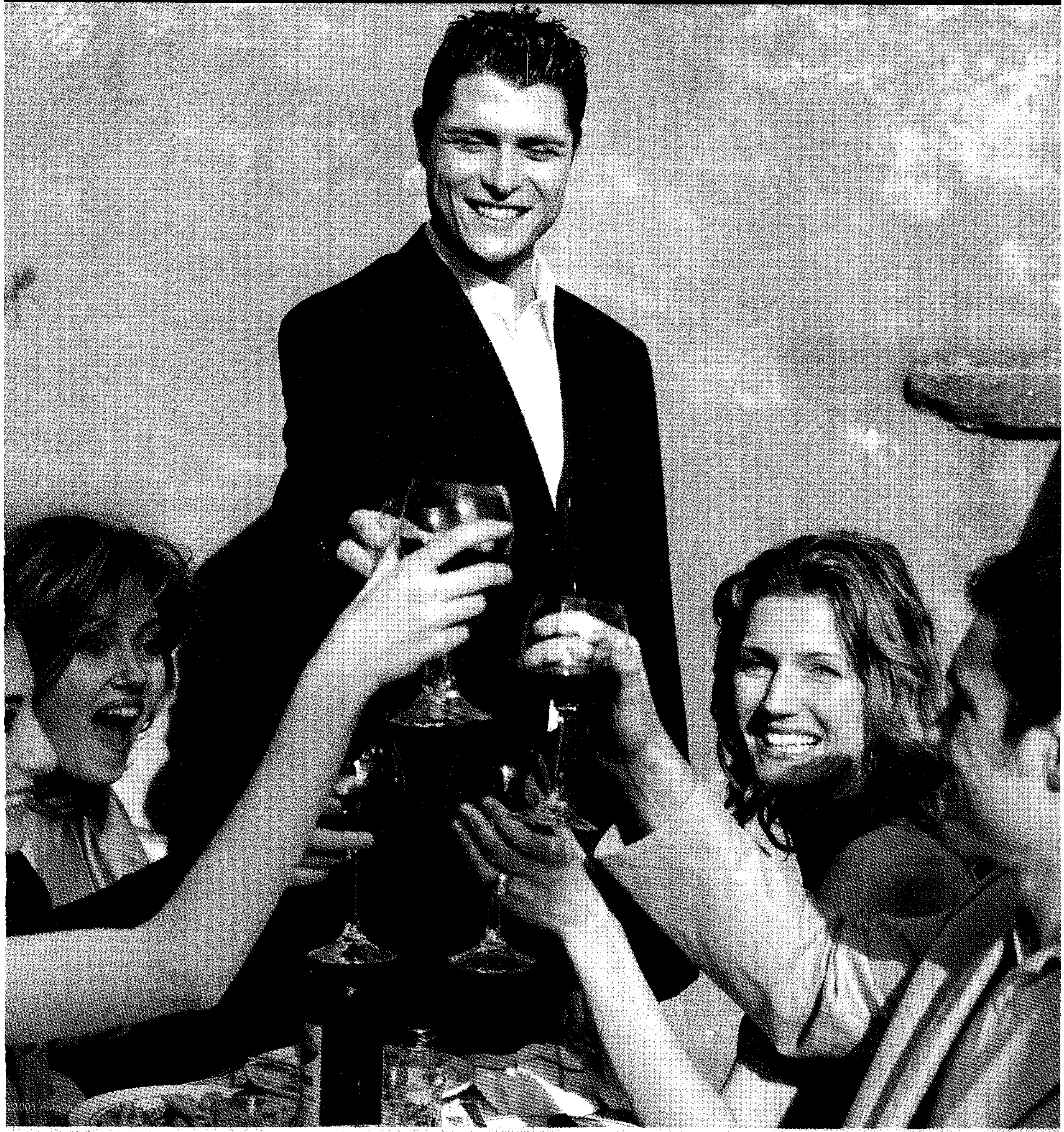

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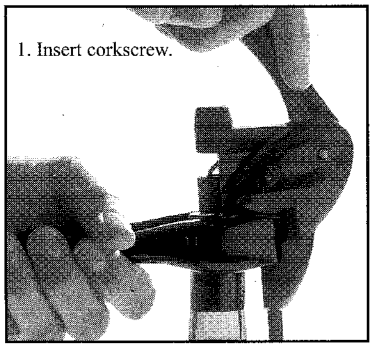

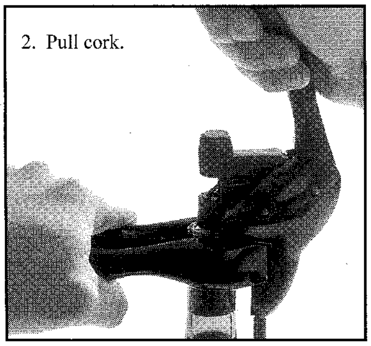

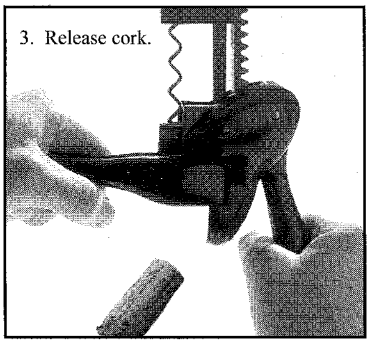

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DEATH BE NOT PROUD

Hendrik Hertzberg's account of the last federal execution, a hanging that took place in a state penitentiary in Iowa on March 15, 1963, stated that the only witnesses were "people who had to be there—prison employees, morticians, a priest, a few reporters" (The Talk of the Town, May 14th). In addition, I was there, using a privilege I had as an Iowa state legislator to enter any of the state prisons at any time of my own volition. My motive for witnessing the event was to garner publicity for the abolition of the death penalty in Iowa. By watching my state deliberately kill one of its citizens while publicly challenging the wisdom of doing so, I did get a lot of attention—enough so that, two years later, I was honored to be the chief sponsor of a successful bill outlawing the death penalty here. Iowa became the sixth state to do so; there are still only twelve states in this lofty category. Now, nearing the close of my life (I am eighty-two), I still believe that watching that fearful hanging thirty-eight years ago was the most important thing I have ever done.

John M. Ely, Jr.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

EXTREME GOLF

There is something terribly frustrating about David Owen's account of the King Hassan II Golf Trophy tournament in Morocco ("Swinging in Morocco," May 21st). Apart from being dreadfully poor, Morocco is a country that is perennially wracked by drought. Golf courses are notorious for diminishing the water table; building them, along with the attendant hotels and swimming pools, was thus not only a decadent decision by Hassan II, the present King's father, but a reckless one. The irony is not lost on nonroyal Moroccans: Ahmed Sanoussi, a popular comedian who was severely beaten by the police during Hassan's reign after criticizing the government in his performances, used to describe the golf courses as oases ringed by thirsty cows, with their mouths watering, desperate to graze on the green grass. Foreign diplomats, businesspeople, tourists, and golf professionals may have fun in the King's amusement parks, but almost none of his subjects can afford to enter.

Gregory W. White
Leeds, Mass.

THE BIRD HUNTERS

Reading Jonathan Rosen's piece on the hunt for the near-mythical ivory-billed woodpecker, now feared to be extinct, I was reminded of how the simple notion of this vanished bird enriched many childhoods, including mine, in the same way that U.F.O.s and dinosaurs still do ("The Ghost Bird," May 14th). In the late nineteen-fifties, when I was a bird-crazy eight-year-old, I convinced myself that I had spotted an ivorybill on a family trip to Virginia—based on a fleeting glimpse of a large black bird in flight, seen from our car window as we sped past a pine forest. I gravely informed my family of the urgency of notifying the Audubon Society of this important development. After all these years, I hoped that Rosen was going to report that living birds had been found in some bottomland forest in Louisiana. At least he leaves the dream intact. Rosen's most compelling suggestion is that there is, perhaps, a greater likelihood that the ivorybill survives in Cuba, the site of the most encouraging recent encounters, than in the American South: the birds—like the tail-finned cars on the streets of Havana—may be a piece of the past that has waited on that island, unchanged.

Bruce M. Beehler
Chair, Policy Council
American Bird Conservancy
Washington, D.C.

•

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January 1998. The European Parliament releases a report that shocks the world. Five nations (the U.S., England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) are members of a spy network that aims to intercept virtually all forms of electronic communications. Its popular name: Echelon. Its purpose: worldwide surveillance—not just of other intelligence agencies, but of civilians. And at the helm is America's very own National Security Agency.

The report details how Echelon works. Land-based antennae capture radio transmissions. Satellites catch "spillover" data as it travels from city to city. And Internet-based "sniffer" devices scan emails and website content.

Other reports prove even more disquieting. Whistle-blowers charge that intelligence agencies interested in spying on their citizenry have asked allies to do it for them, thus avoiding culpability under the laws which prevent unwarranted searches. In our country, this is nothing less than the Fourth Amendment.

Meanwhile, other government agencies have developed their own means of spying on civilians. Under the FBI's Internet wiretap system, called Carnivore, Internet service providers are forced to attach a black box directly to their networks—a powerful computer through which all of their users' communications may flow. This is like giving the FBI the power to go into the Post Office and open each and every mailbag in search of one person's letters.

Our right to privacy is on the brink of extinction. We must act now to put an end to unwarranted government snooping. Visit us at www.aclu.org/privacyrights in order to learn more and to send your Members of Congress a free fax. Although they may not be the only ones reading it.

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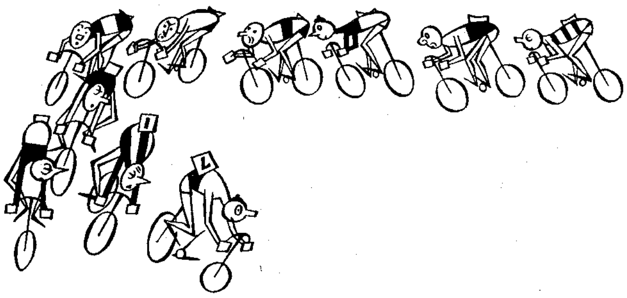

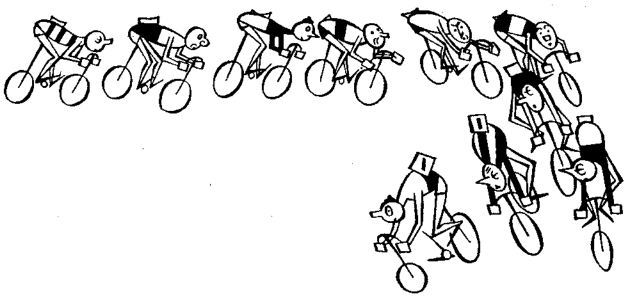

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

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10	11	12				

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BLUE
Phylicia Rashad is the star of a new comedy by Charles Randolph-Wright, with music by Nona Hendryx. In previews. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

BYRD'S BOY
Bruce J. Robinson's drama, about a homeless man who believes he's the son of Admiral Byrd. In previews through June 10. Opens June 11 at 7. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

CHAUCER IN ROME
The latest play by John Guare, set in Italy during the final year of the last millennium. Nicholas Martin is the director. Two previews on June 6. Opens June 7 at 6:45. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE
The final series in this year's six-week marathon of one acts begins June 6 at 7:30 with plays by Edward Allan Baker, Craig Lucas, Julie McKee, and David Riedy and continues through June 17. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

IN THE PENAL COLONY
Philip Glass's new musical, based on the Kafka story. JoAnne Akalaitis is the director. Previews begin June 7. (Classic Stage Company, 36 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
Billy Crudup, Sanaa Lathan, Joe Morton, and John Pankow head up the cast in the New York Shakespeare Festival's first outdoor production of the season. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!
An autobiographical musical by the late Jonathan Larson ("Rent"). In previews. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL
A kind of "My Fair Bat Boy," in which a half-bat, half-man—memorably played by Deven May—emerges from his childhood cave into adult bourgeois life. But the musical world he enters is one of darkness, not light, of ironies, not idealism, where plot is a history of abdications and song extolls the emptiness of all the standard credos—Christianity, family, community, love, redemption—and of the musical itself. It's a jejune vision, but a smart, playful, and funny one nonetheless. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/9/01.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

BELLS ARE RINGING
Faith Prince and Marc Kudisch lead the cast in a revival of the 1956 Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jule Styne musical. Tina Landau is the director. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BLUR
A new comedy by Melanie Marnich, in which a teen-ager discovers she's going blind. Polly Draper and Angela Goethals are in the cast. Lynne Meadow is the director. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes June 24.)

A CLASS ACT
Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical. With songs by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. Mr. Price is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE CREDEAUX CANVAS
Michael Mayer directs a play by Keith Bunin, about three ambitious East Villagers with a scheme. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes June 17.)

THE DOG PROBLEM
David Rabe's new play, about a man, his dog, and the Mafia. Scott Ellis is the director. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ELI'S COMIN'
The late Laura Nyro's witty, passionate songs first came to public attention in 1968. This cycle of twenty of them manages, without a spoken word, to tell the tale of a woman's life in the city—a tale of fun, temptation, loss, and redemption—without a false note (in any sense). The terrific Judy Kuhn leads the cast. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

FOLLIES
This revival of Stephen Sondheim and James Goldman's landmark 1971 musical, which takes place at a reunion of Ziegfeld-like performers, is less lavish than the original production, but no matter: the show's real grandeur lies in its imaginative structure and the unfolding of its lyrically rich, resonant songs. In the hands of Matthew Warchus, who directed, the relentless, unblinking intelligence is intact. (4/23 & 30/01) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

FORTY-SECOND STREET
As a domineering diva who breaks her ankle before the big opening night, the wonderful Christine Ebersole steals the show in this revival of the 1980 tap musical based on the 1933 film. But it has to be said: it was probably easy to do. As the young chorine who steps in to save the day, Kate Levering doesn't have enough star power to shine above the legions of hoofers who crowd the stage, and Michael Cumpsty, as the gruff director, is sorely miscast. Still, if this sort of show is your cup of tea, the songs are wonderful and the dancing is fine—just know that the cup is not quite full. (Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

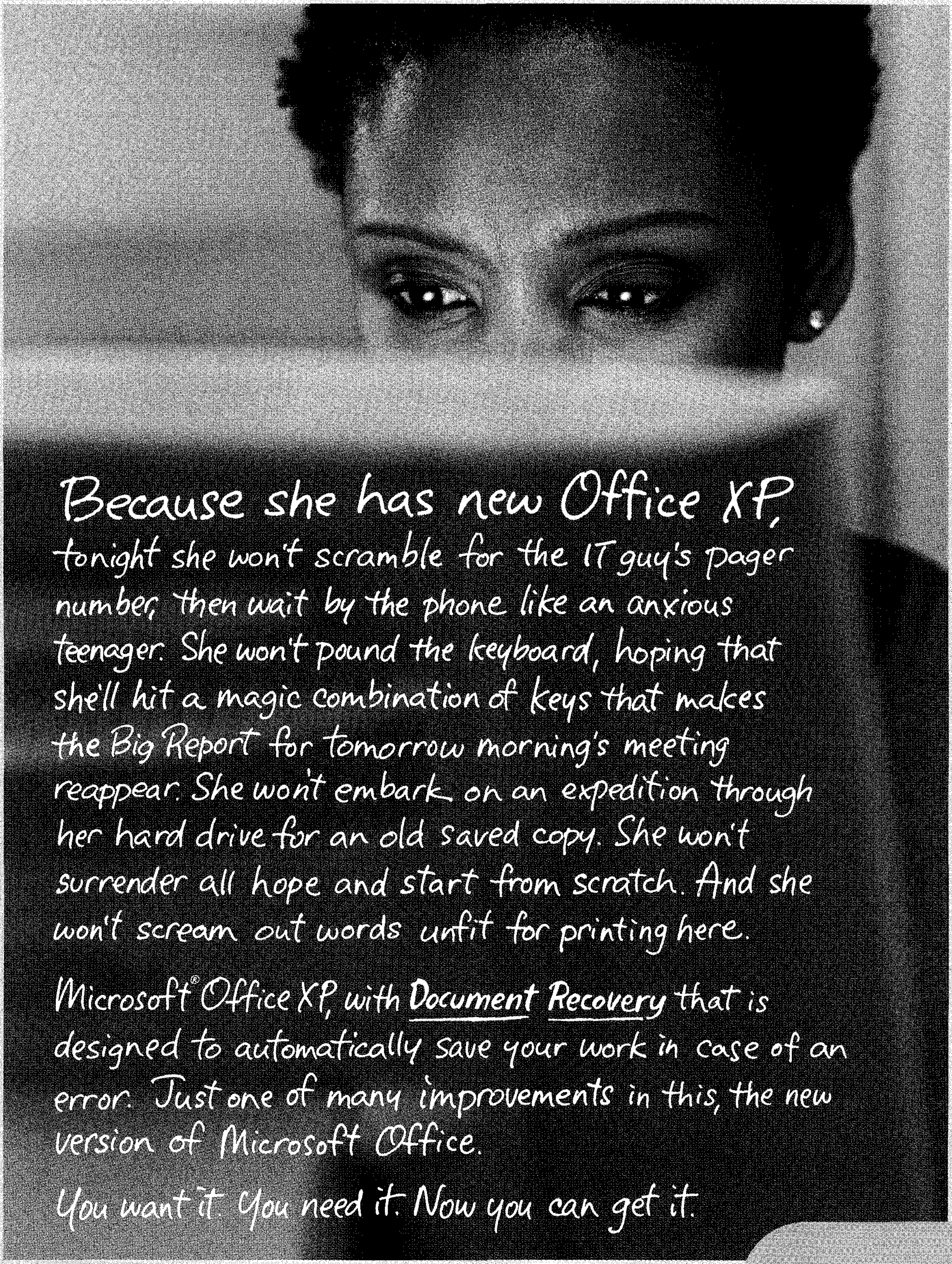
GEORGE GERSHWIN ALONE
A one-man portrait with music, written and performed by Hershey Felder and directed by Joel Zwick. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 349-6200.)

GLIMMER, GLIMMER AND SHINE
The newest installment of Warren Leight's jazz reverie (he wrote the Broadway hit "Side Man"), in which the cool world and the straight world collide. Jordan Shine (Scott Cohen), the trombone-playing protégé of the trumpeter Marty Glimmer (the superb John Spencer), reveals that at a wedding gig in Greenwich, Connecticut, he met and fell for one of the guests, a pert marketing executive called Delia (Seana Kofoed), who turns out to be Marty's niece—the daughter of his estranged twin brother and former partner in a jazz combo. After the group fell apart, Marty stuck to jazz's romantic, druggy, penurious, crooked ways, while his brother renounced music and became a successful textile manufacturer. On this sketchy coincidence hangs Leight's slim, clichéd tale of possible reconciliation. Luckily, Leight loves Marty, and he contrives to let the wisecracking old wastrel rip at one point, leaving behind the constraints of the formulaic plot for a verbal solo, which Spencer, with his gruff tones, elevates to a kind of ontological cool. (6/4/01) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

I LOVE AMERICA
For her one-woman show about Dominicans seeking refuge in the United States, Lidia Ramirez conducted dozens of interviews with members of the Coast Guard and with civilians in New York, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

THE INVENTION OF LOVE
Tom Stoppard's witty, challenging account of the classicist and poet A. E. Housman and the love that not only dared not speak its name but didn't even have one until 1895 (when the word "homosexual" was coined). Jack O'Brien's well-directed, lucid production features some fine acting, especially by Richard Easton as the elder/dead Housman and Robert Sean Leonard as the young classicist in love. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

KING HEDLEY II
August Wilson's new play, set in Pittsburgh in 1985, is a tale of rage, redemption, and Reaganomics. Its eponymous protagonist, played by Brian Stokes



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Mitchell, is eager to start anew after emerging from a long prison term for killing a man, but hard times and his own self-destructive ways seem to conspire against him. Despite some good performances by Viola Davis, Stephen McKinley Henderson, and Charles Brown, the play lacks psychological credibility, and its heavy cargo of symbolism and coincidence often makes it feel like a soap opera. Directed by Marion McClinton. (5/14/01) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

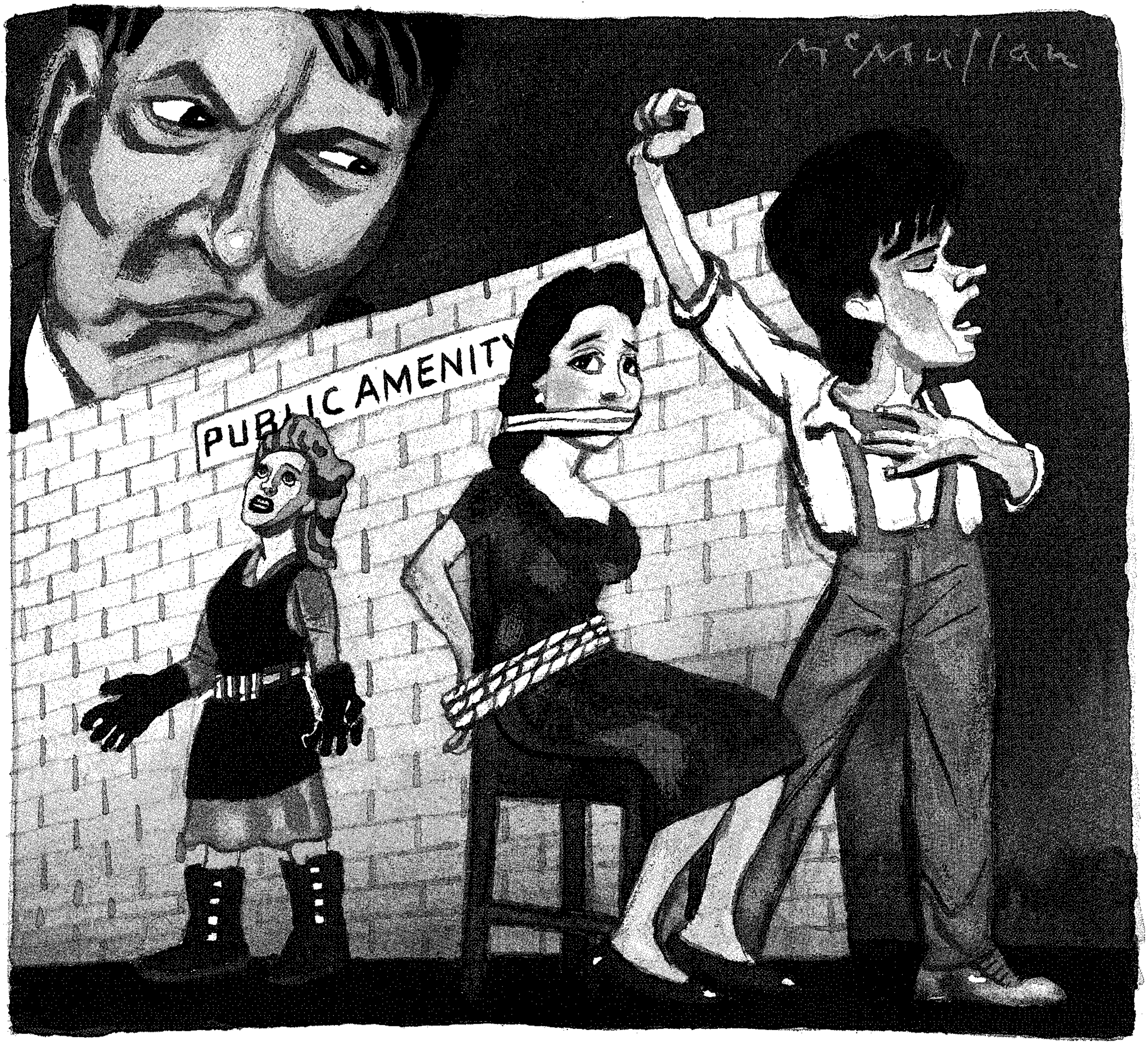
LIPSTICK TRACES
The rock critic Greil Marcus's 1989 book, "Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century," which traced the intellectual roots of punk music, wouldn't seem to hold much promise as a source of drama—and that's because it doesn't. Rather than connecting the dots for the audience, this diffuse pastiche by the Austin, Texas, troupe Rude Mechs places punk on a pop-cultural pedestal while consigning other notable anarchic movements and moments (France's Situationists, the plight of the sixteenth-century heretic John of Leiden and the Anabaptists, Dada) to a kind of silly oblivion. And with the focus on Malcolm McLaren's Machiavellian marketing of Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols, in the end it's the modern power spin that resonates. Fans hoping for a romp through the Pistols' brief reign will leave mostly unsatisfied, but they will get a look at the energetic work of some smart, talented, albeit not-ready-for-prime-time players. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 800-965-4827. Closes June 10.)

LOBBY HERO
In another era, the contrivances of Kenneth Lonergan's new play would have been called hokum. It's set in a Manhattan apartment-house lobby and involves a slacker security guard, his ambitious boss, and two cops (a sleazy guy and an inept woman, who are investigating a murder and having an affair). But because Lonergan is the writer and director of the moving and successful film "You Can Count on Me" and the author of the acclaimed plays "This Is Our Youth" and "The Waverly Gallery," the public is expecting him to aim high. He does, and misses. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

LOVE, JANIS
A musical play about Janis Joplin, at the spiffy new theatre that was formerly the Village Gate, built around her songs, writings, and interviews. Though it contains no new insight, it's a useful corrective to the drunken, drug-addicted legend, and the production is a fine one. Randal Myler directed with a sure eye for the telling detail, and the seven-member band really cooks. Two singers alternate as "singing Janis"; on a recent night Cathy Richardson was in splendid voice and demeanor. The backbone of the evening, however, is Catherine Curtin's "speaking Janis." It's an intelligent, vulnerable, self-aware performance that transcends the Janis myth and showcases the talent of a powerful actress. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

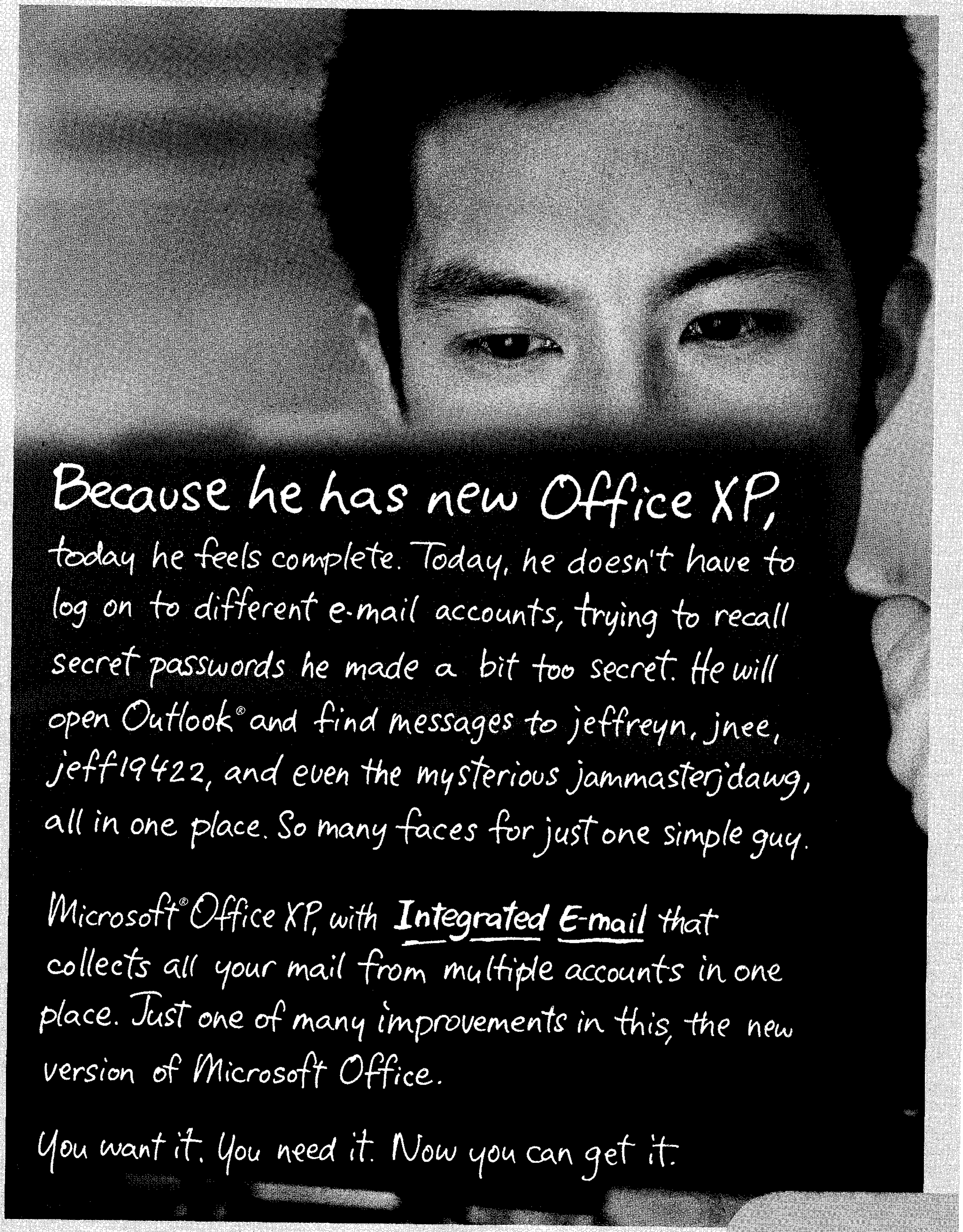
MADAME MELVILLE
Mature audiences may be split down the middle on Richard Nelson's much lauded coming-of-age drama; in it the waifish former child star Macaulay Culkin (now twenty) portrays an American high-school student in nineteen-sixties Paris, who grows up at the hands of his much older French teacher (Joely Richardson, who seems to be channelling the spirit of Claudine Longet). Although it's about as fresh as a forgotten slice of Camembert at the back of your refrigerator, the play understandably evokes pleasurable adolescent fantasies for men. For the rest of the population, it's more likely to evoke the heebie-jeebies. Stale story aside, Culkin's stilted, singsongy delivery and fragile demeanor are so grating that even the most unstable, immature, or sexually predatory woman would kick him out of bed—if she let him get there at all. The bright light is Robin Weigert, who plays Richardson's live-wire neighbor, a recently liberated New Jersey housewife pursuing her dream of making a living as a cellist. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

A NAUGHTY KNIGHT
Chuck Strand wrote the music and lyrics and William Martin wrote the book for this musical loosely based on Mark Twain's "A Medieval



JAMES MCMULLAN

"Urinetown," a musical comedy by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis, directed by John Rando.



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Romance." A Jewish Repertory Theatre production. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

NEW WORK
A work in progress from the Wooster Group, based on Paul Schmidt's translation of Racine's "Phèdre." (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes July 1.)

NOCTURNE
In Adam Rapp's new drama, a young man must deal with the aftermath of his sister's death, which he accidentally caused. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200. Closes June 17.)

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST
Dale Wasserman's severely dated adaptation of Ken Kesey's 1962 novel—a broad allegory, set in a mental hospital, about the perils of nonconformity—is a quaint relic, but as staged by Chicago's excellent Steppenwolf Theatre it's a well-acted one. Gary Sinise leads the cast, as the incorrigible mental patient Randle P. McMurphy. Terry Kinney is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Jean-François Regnard's 1708 comedy, "A Will of His Own," runs in repertory with Racine's "Andromache." (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes June 17.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY
In Edward Albee's new play, an older couple provide a harsh taste of what life has in store for a young couple with a new baby: the ravages of adulthood, the tidal wave of troubles and injuries that come with time. Brian Murray and Marian Seldes, two veterans who are rarely less than riveting, make the most of Albee's sharp, enigmatic writing; their highly stylized, virtuosic performances here are stunning. David Esbjornson directed. (2/19 & 26/01) (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THE PRODUCERS
High-camp heaven from Mel Brooks, who wrote the music and the lyrics for this monster-hit version of his 1968 movie—in which two scoundrels try to bilk their investors by staging a surefire failure, entitled "Springtime for Hitler." What's first-rate about this particular seduction is Brooks's antic imagination and the atmosphere of audacious liberty with which he turns atrocity into travesty (a fabulous high-kicking chorus in swastika formation sings to "ev'ry hotsy-totsy Nazi"). With the help of his deft and witty co-author, Thomas Meehan, Brooks reins in his compulsion to tell four jokes where one will do, and the jokes he does tell almost always hit their marks. The performing centerpiece of the show is Nathan Lane, as the flamboyant huckster Bialystock; his kind of high-amperage panache is in limited supply these days, and both he and the excellent Matthew Broderick, as the hapless accountant Leo Bloom, deliver the mail. Expertly staged by Susan Stroman. (5/7/01) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SO LONG AGO I CAN'T REMEMBER: A DIVINE COMEDY
The latest multimedia production by the troupe Gale Gates et al. takes its inspiration from Dante. (37 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-522-4597. Closes June 30.)

STONES IN HIS POCKETS
Marie Jones's play is set in an Irish village where a big-budget Hollywood movie is being made. Conleth Hill and Seán Campion play two extras in the movie and all thirteen other characters as well, including the movie's female star, its director, and various locals. Though the play has its clever ways when it comes to sending up both Hollywood and Irish mores, the stories told here aren't anything you haven't seen before. (4/16/01) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THIEF RIVER
Gregg Edelman stars in a new play by Lee Blessing, under the direction of Mark Lamos. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes June 17.)

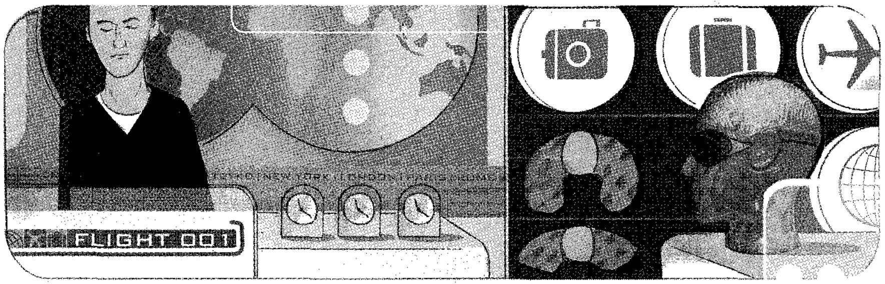
UNCLE BOB
In a new play by Austin Pendleton, George Morfogen portrays a man dying of AIDS and Joseph Gordon-Levitt his homophobic nephew. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

URINETOWN: THE MUSICAL
A musical comedy by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis, about a city in a state of ecological disaster. John Rando is the director. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 239-6200. Closes June 25.)

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

And Miles to Go

It's a rare duffel that's equally at home on a beach in Borneo or at a bottle club in Mayfair, but the oblong sack at **FLIGHT 001** (96 Greenwich Ave.; 691-1001) comes close: it's emblazoned with plum and tangerine bubbles on a hundred per cent vinyl tough enough to haul wet wash. Like many of the items at Flight 001—a shop named in honor of Pan Am's inaugural commercial round-the-world flight—the bag manages to inject a bit of whimsy into the increasingly unglamorous world of travel. A fake-leopard-fur eyeshade has a matching buckwheat-filled neck rest ($34) that can be adjusted at thirty-nine thousand feet (just add or subtract grain). The shop's orange nylon-canvas dog carriers "won't collapse on the animal like the other ones do," promises the manager, adding that, despite their moniker (K-9 Sport), the totes ($98) have transported more than a few cats and, in at least one case, a parrot. Vacationers wishing to make a permanent record of a bird in a suitcase, along with other globe-trotting wonders, can employ a Casio digital-camera watch ($255) that's equipped to take a hundred P.C.-ready black-and-white photos.



There's nothing wrong with Flight 001's set of five plastic bottles, variously designed to squeeze, drop, pump, spray, or pour ($12), but its allure dissipates when compared with the G. Lorenzi toiletry kit at the **BERGDORF GOODMAN'S** men's store (Fifth Ave. at 58th St.; 753-7300). Imported from Milan, this item is clearly not intended for the passenger who is concerned with airline weight limits. The glove-leather case unsnaps to reveal glass flacons, natural-bristle hair and nail brushes, a horn comb, all manner of elegantly rendered clippers and snippers, and even three slender tubes labelled "crema da barba," "sapone toilette," and "dentifricio" ($650).

At **KARIKTER** (19 Prince St.; 274-1966) four blobby fellows created by Stefano Pirovani for the Italian design firm Alessi are good for capping *dentifricio* and toothbrushes; the least lucky of the group dispenses floss from his back ($38). The quartet comes in a variety of cheerful hues and might raise a smile in the economy-class washroom queue. The same shop has reissues of the black covered diaries called *moleskines* ($12) that were at one time highly prized by creative types like Céline and Matisse. (In 1986, when the firm that made the *moleskines* closed down, Bruce Chatwin's Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie stationer wrote him mournfully that he could not send the hundred books the author had ordered, explaining, "Le vrai moleskine n'est plus.")

The first of two rooms that comprise the **COMPLETE TRAVELLER BOOK STORE** (199 Madison Ave.; 685-9007) is stocked with the predictable Fodor's and Frommer's, Lonely Planets and Let's Gos, but the other room is given over to a stellar collection of antiquarian volumes. The selection is vast and not limited to works about real destinations; it includes books about places you'd never dream of going (the Gulag Archipelago) or couldn't find if you tried (Treasure Island). A wall of crimson-bound, turn-of-the-century Baedekers reminds readers of a time when the world was both bigger and smaller: though it may have taken weeks to get to Capri, the 1887 Baedeker for Southern Italy ($60) was able to tell travellers who were feeling croupy that a Dr. Hildebrandt at Villa Giardina, near the piazza, stood ready to minister to them.

—*Lynn Yaeger*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

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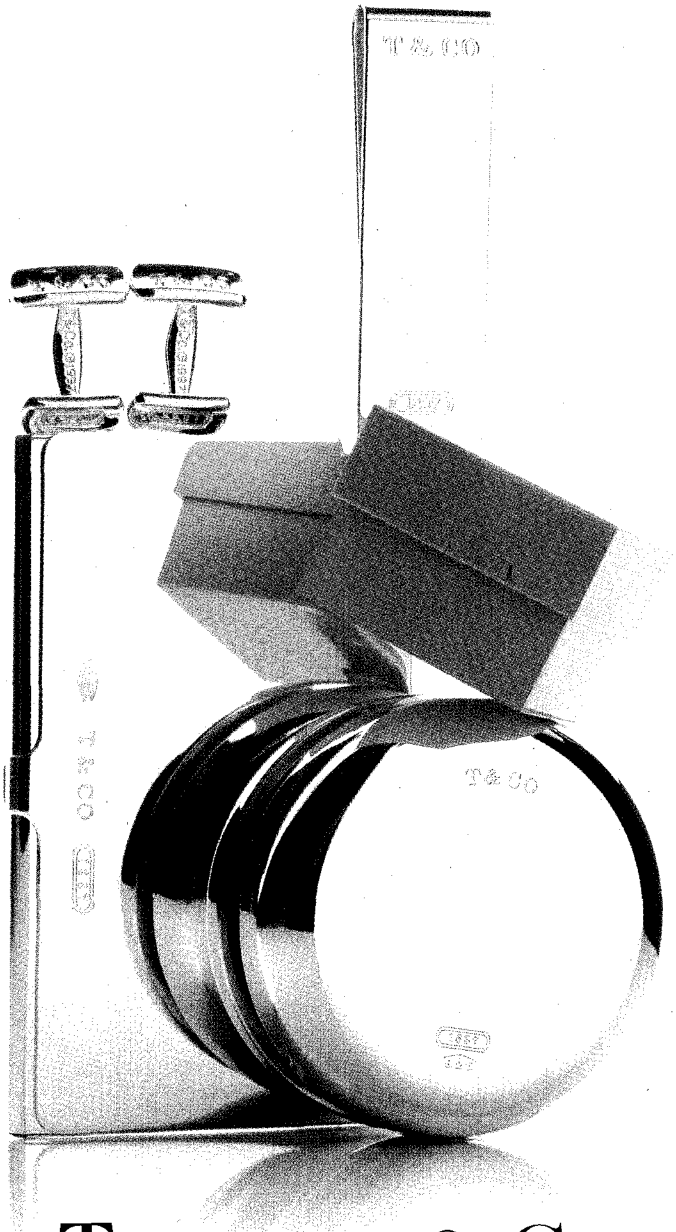

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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
June 6 at 8: "Ancient Airs and Dances," "Romeo and Juliet," "Allegro Brillante," and "La Sonnambula." ♦ June 7 at 8: "Burleske," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "Organon." ♦ June 8 at 8: "La Source," "Stabat Mater," and "Brandenburg." ♦ June 9 at 2: "Square Dance," "Polyphonia," "Duo Concertant," and "Swan Lake." ♦ June 9 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Allegro Brillante," and "Firebird." ♦ June 10 at 3: "Brandenburg," "Episodes," and "Organon." ♦ June 12 at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Duo Concertant," "Stabat Mater," and "Scotch Symphony." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through July 1.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
June 6 at 2 and 8 and June 7 at 8: "Onegin." ♦ June 8 and June 11 at 8 and June 9 at 2 and 8: "Don Quixote." ♦ June 12 at 8: "Theme and Variations," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "The Nutcracker," "Rose Adagio," and "The Sleeping Beauty, Act III." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through June 23.)

"PAST FORWARD"
Ever since he founded the White Oak Dance Project, in 1990, Mikhail Baryshnikov has been shuttling between modern dance's past and its present, carrying large audiences with him. This year, he and his small, excellent company present new and revived works from sixties-era innovators Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, Trisha Brown, and Simone Forti, who, in their first years of experimentation at the Judson Memorial Church, entertained—or rather, refused to entertain—a tiny audience of artists and theatre folk. (The dance crowd mainly stayed away.) At the time, people showed up to see what would remain once dance had shed its drama and virtuosity, and its distance from the spectator. But what do audiences turn out for now, after thirty years? "Mr. Baryshnikov," says Gordon, who is directing the performance. "They're not in the least hungry for this stuff. But by the end of the night they'll stand up and cheer." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. June 5-9 at 7:30.)

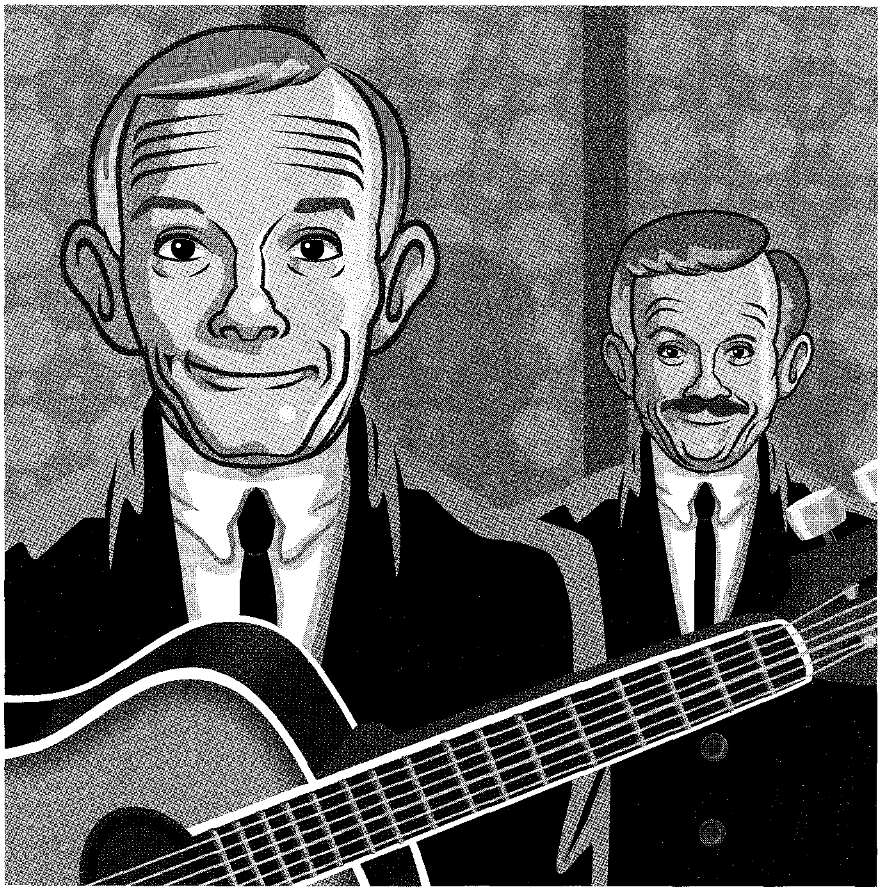
MONTE/BROWN DANCE
For its twentieth-anniversary season, the company presents three programs, all of which feature new work and revivals. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 5 at 7:30, June 6-8 at 8, June 9 at 2 and 8, and June 10 at 2 and 7:30.)

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
Three choreographers, Peggy H. Cheng, Allyson Green, and Mark Haim, curate an evening apiece: Cheng offers duets from Jennifer Chin and Maura Nguyen Donohue and others, Green presents solos and duets, and Haim limits a host of performers (including Doug Elkins, Keely Garfield, Terry Hollis, and Vicky Schick) to three minutes each. Tickets are half price for dancegoers who leave two canned goods. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 8-10 at 8:30.)

THE NETA DANCE COMPANY
Four works by the choreographer Neta Pulvermacher include the première of "4 Stories," created in collaboration with the violinist and composer Miri Ben-Ari; "Vivaldiana," for six women; "Goodbye and Good Luck"; and "The Great Big Orange." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793, ext. 11. June 6-9 at 8.)

"FREE THE ANGELS"
The choreographer Nicholas Leichter and his seven-member company present a two-part première, set to songs by Stevie Wonder, which traces the connections between sexuality and spirituality. The evening also includes "Black American Psycho," "Undertow," and "Worth," set to the music of Mary J. Blige, Björk, and Erykah Badu, respectively. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. June 7-10 at 8. Through July 1.)

NINA WINTHROP & DANCERS
For its tenth-anniversary season, the company offers two dance pieces, the solo "Exissensuelle" and the trio "Duelle," and two short films, "Stir" and "Too Close for Conversation." (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. June 8-9 at 8.)



Tom and Dick Smothers bring their musical-comedy act to Feinstein's at the Regency.

MICHAEL WELDON

"RIVERDANCE—ON BROADWAY"
Not the Lord of the Dance with his shirt off and the leather truss. The other one. (Gershwin Theatre, 222 W. 51st St. 307-4100. June 5, June 7-8, and June 12 at 8; June 6 and June 9 at 2 and 8; and June 10 at 3. Through Aug. 26.)

"BLACK MADRIGAL"
A program of four works by Michael Mao includes the première of the title work, set to the music of Mauricio Kagel. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. June 8 at 8.)

"SWARM"
The dance cooperative Kick/StandDance performs one work by each of the five founders: Abby Bender ("3 Piece Suit/e"), Cary Baker ("I Am Twice"), Sonya Robbins ("Flicker"), Autumn Anna Luckey ("Interstice"), and Layla Childs ("Highly Inflammable Perfectly Unnatural"). (Williamsburg Art Nexus, 205 North 7th St., Brooklyn. 718-599-7997. June 6-9 at 8 and June 10 at 4 and 8.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

VISION FESTIVAL
The avant-jazz festival winds down at a new venue, the Angel Orensanz Center, with the addition of a few resolutely independent pop acts. Highlights are as follows. June 6: **Joe Maneri,** the master of the microtonal saxophone and his quartet; the trumpeter **Joe McPhee** and **Trio X;** and the Hoboken rockers **Yo La Tengo.** June 7: The trumpeter **Roy Campbell** takes the spotlight, the tenor-saxophone phenomenon and sometime pianist **Charles Gayle** offers a solo show, and the bassist **William Parker** leads a quintet with the Chicago drum giant **Hamid Drake.** Also on the bill are the masterful turntablists the **X-ecutioners.** June 8: The closing night brings in the free-jazz tenor titan **David S. Ware** and his mind-meld quartet, featuring the pianist **Matthew Shipp,** who will also lead his own trio. The enigmatic singer **Chan Marshall** drops the Cat Power moniker for the night. (172 Norfolk St. For more information, call 473-0043, or visit www.visionfestival.org.)

LUCINDA WILLIAMS
This outstanding and uncategorizable songwriter from Baton Rouge—consider her the spiritual daughter of Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf—is touring in support of "Essence," her follow-up to the widely acclaimed "Car Wheels on a Gravel Road." (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. June 6 at 7:30.)

BLACK CROWES / OASIS
A Retropalooza. The stridently backward-looking Black Crowes pine for the days of Zeppelinesque hedonism, while the creatively static Oasis continues to mine surface-level Beatle-isms. With the perpetual opening act Spacehog, which vainly attempts to jump-start seventies-style platform-heeled glam rock. Come witness man's futile struggle against the cruel march of time. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. June 7-9 at 7.)

LOSER'S LOUNGE
The keyboardist and cultural archeologist Joe McGinty and his band of merry pranksters turn the spotlight on Paul Williams, the author of the "Love Boat" theme song and "Rainbow Connection," among many other twentieth-century artifacts. And Williams himself has agreed to appear at a few of the shows (which ones those will be remains to be seen). (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. June 7 at 8 and June 8-9 at 9.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—June 6: **Leo Kottke.** The death earlier this year of the eccentric six- and twelve-string-guitar visionary John Fahey leaves Kottke to carry on his legacy. Throughout his long

career Kottke has explored a wide-ranging musical terrain, from the inventive work of Harry Partch to the stripped-down and dirty songs of Son House, often bringing the two together. On his recent album "One Guitar, No Vocals," he eloquently performs his compositions, new and old, with the means described in the album's straightforward title. June 8-9: **John Entwistle,** the bassist for The Who, breaks out the old back catalogue.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—June 8-9: Venezuela's favorite dance band, **Los Amigos Invisibles.** June 11: Like the forlorn songs of his equally gifted colleague Freedy Johnston, **Ron Sexsmith's** work is exquisite yet unfashionable. June 12: The **Stereo MCs.** Despite taking eight years to complete its latest album, "DJ Kicks," Britain's seminal multiracial, quasi-hip-hop/dance collective keeps the beat fresh.

CENTRO FLY

45 W. 21st St. (627-7770)—June 7: The latest dance craze in England is garage, a form of uptempo R. &. B. One funny thing about the phenomenon is that folks such as **MJ Cole,** a white, classically trained musician who was born Matthew Coleman, are its leading avatars. Another funny thing is that, if you overlook the mistaken forays into rapping, it's damn good music. June 12: The **Fantastic Plastic Machine.** Tomoyuki Tanaka, a Japanese Jack-of-all-trades, is the brains behind this project. The former fashion-magazine editor, onetime radio-show host, and relentless record collector mixes up a rich cocktail of string-fuelled sixties kitsch, seventies disco beats, and other, more esoteric influences—the septuagenarian jazz singer (and "School House Rock" lyricist) Bob Dorough contributed to the latest Plastic release, "Beautiful."

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—June 6: The postmodern folk of **Joseph Arthur.** June 7: Reborn after a brief stint on a major label and the loss of three members, Eric Sanko's **Skeleton Key** returns as a power trio still committed to herky-jerk rhythms and ferocious rock clamor. June 8: Favorites of the fickle indie-rock cognoscenti, the **Delta '72** practice retro garage rock, fuelled by a vintage Farfisa organ and lead singer Gregg Foreman's shtick, which is equal parts James Brown soul strut and Jon Spencer punk swagger.

LUNA LOUNGE

171 Ludlow St. (260-2323)—June 8: A night of organ-fuelled surf rock and spy-theme music from the Boston quintet **Seks Bomba,** which is celebrating the release of a sleek and groovy new album, "Somewhere in the Town."

MAXWELL'S

1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—June 10: **Drums & Tuba,** a highly infectious trio—tuba, drums, and guitar—which laces its loop-filled songs with New Orleans-style grooves and some progressive-rock guitar heroics.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 10: **Hem,** a sextet with a penchant for atypical instrumentation (guitar, mandolin, glockenspiel) and cloudy fairy-tale melodies, performs Sundays in June.

TONIC

107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—June 8: The San Francisco quintet **Sleepytime Gorilla Museum** drops by for a midnight romp. Formed from the ashes of the legendary and now sadly defunct Bay Area outfit Idiot Flesh, the band combines killer musicianship with some truly inspired bombast. Their wildly varied songs—pieces, really—range from manic orchestrations reminiscent of the composer Varèse to staid, haunting vocal melodies accompanied by eerie percussion instruments. Even more strange than the music are the ensemble's performances, which are imbued with the spirit of a joyous, and at times terrifying, anarcho-syndicalist union of performance artists.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND

130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—June 8: The critically acclaimed but commercially ignored singer-songwriter **Amy Rigby.** June 9: The **Levellers** are earnest British folk-popsters who take their anarchy and populist agrarian politics seriously. They may look like crusty punks with a Celtic fixation, but their sound is strictly egalitarian, user-friendly pop. June 12: **Lloyd Cole and the Negatives.** The dark, frequently brilliant Scottish singer is back.

WETLANDS

161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—June 7: The Afro-beat ensemble **Antibalas.** June 8-9: Time has not been especially kind to **Fishbone.** This frantically eclectic band, which fuses ska, punk, heavy metal, funk, and pop into a fence-flattening, genre-blurring force, once seemed destined for superstardom, but the ska revival of the mid-nineties passed them by. These days, Fishbone carries on with jaw-dropping live performances. With **Drums & Tuba** (see Maxwell's) on the 9th.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—June 7-9: The **Marian McPartland** trio. As jazz institutions go, the octogenarian McPartland is still pretty frisky. The vigorous elegance of her own work remains, as does the enthusiasm she extends to other musicians from her pulpit on NPR. This grande dame has been a steadying force on the New York scene for some six decades. Dining.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 10: The **Leo Gandelman** quintet. Saxophonist Gandelman gleefully incorporates the antic notions of free jazz into the tropical mix. The Brazilian vocalist **Emilio Santiago** will keep things steaming.

CARLYLE HOTEL

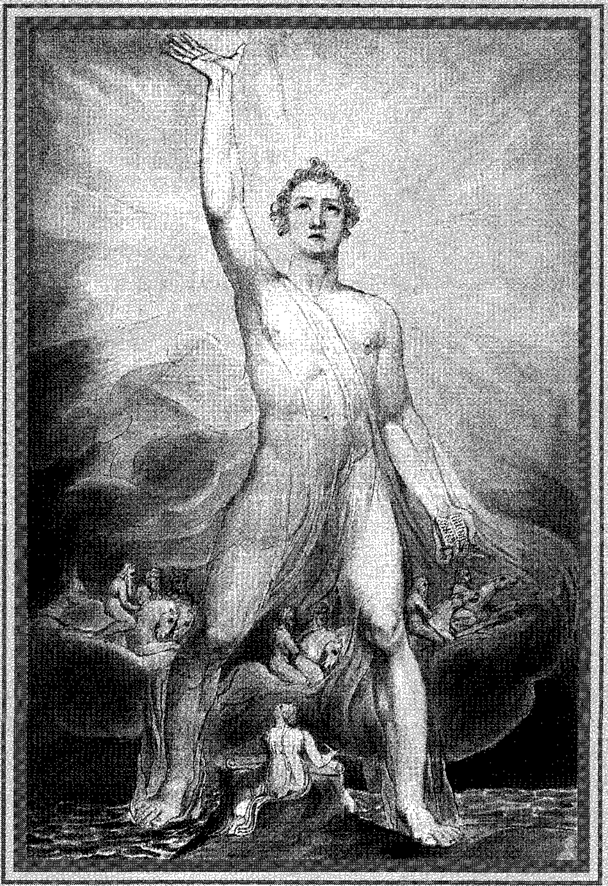
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June 23, the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance at the piano through June 23.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through June 9: Sibling rivalry has paid off big for the **Smothers Brothers** over the years, and thirty-six years after their

"With Blake, you hold Paradise in your hands"
New York Magazine

WILLIAM BLAKE
NOW THROUGH JUNE 24



William Blake, *Angel of the Revelation* (detail), ca. 1803-5, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1914.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.–9 p.m. • Sunday, Tuesday–Thursday 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. • Closed Monday
Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street • 212.535.7710 • For an online preview visit www.metmuseum.org
Supported by The Isaacson-Draper Foundation. Organized by Tate Britain.

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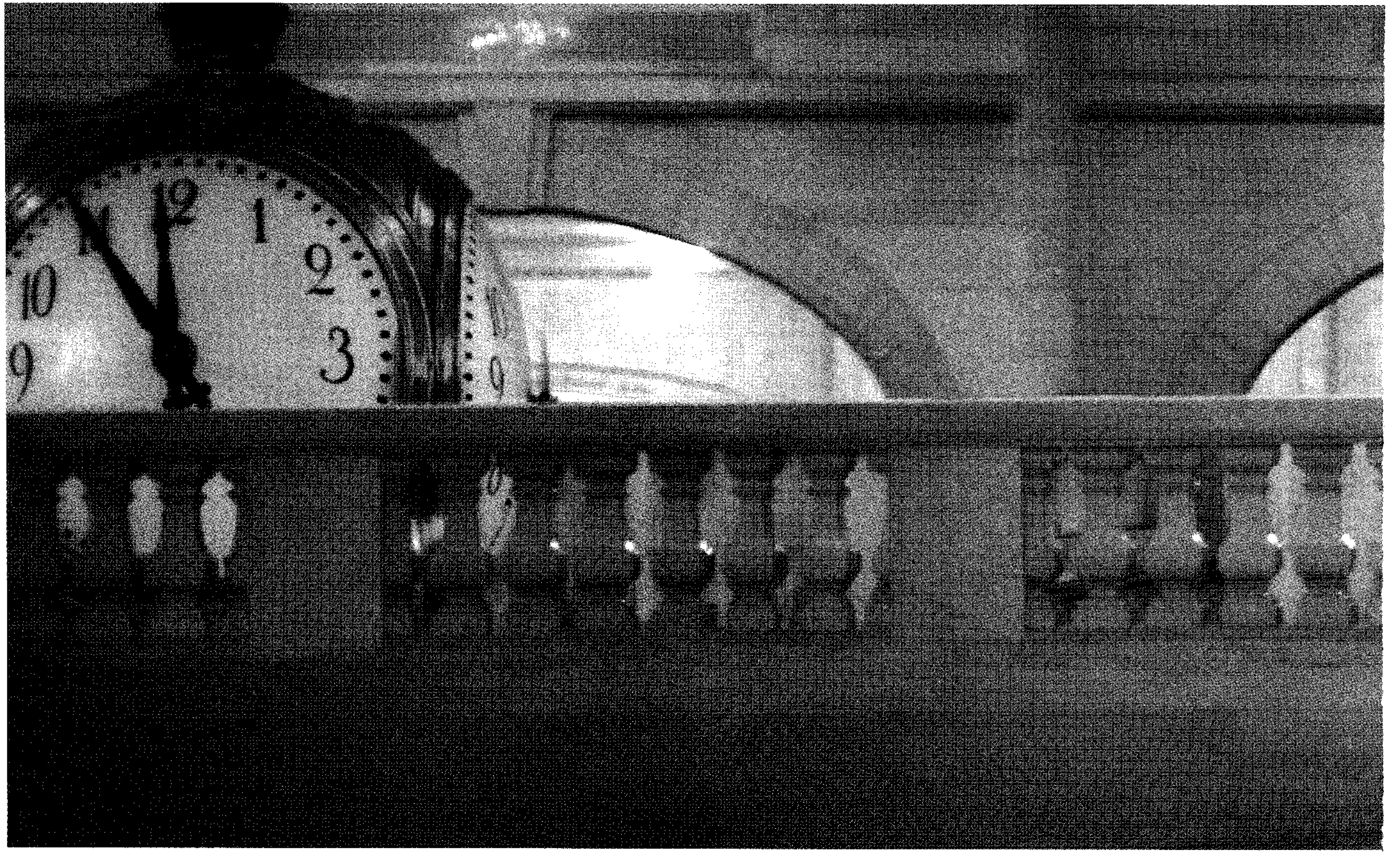

You have a brilliant 5-year plan.
You have one year.

Go. You have a clear-cut course in front of you. Then suddenly, everything changes. Luckily, you h

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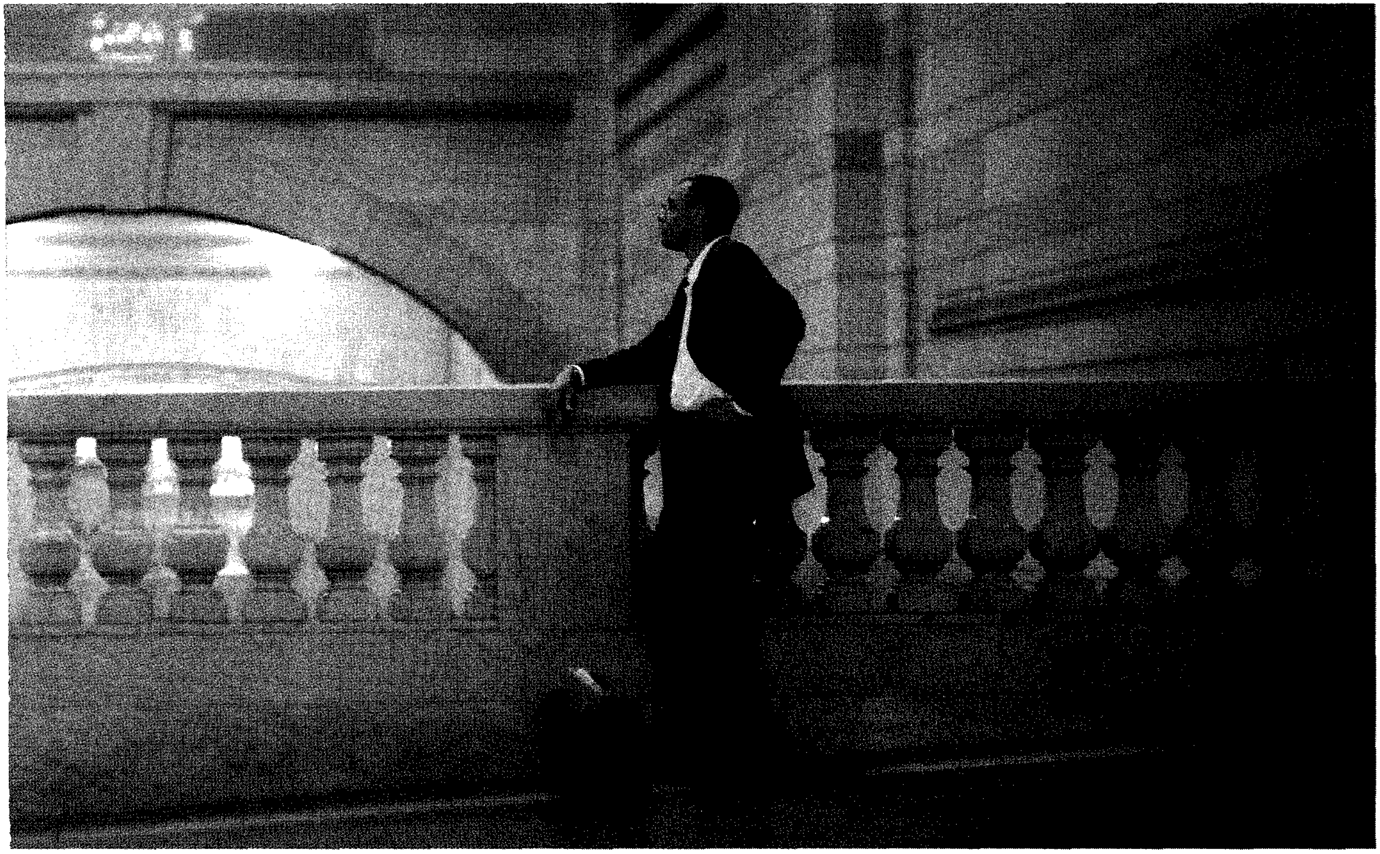


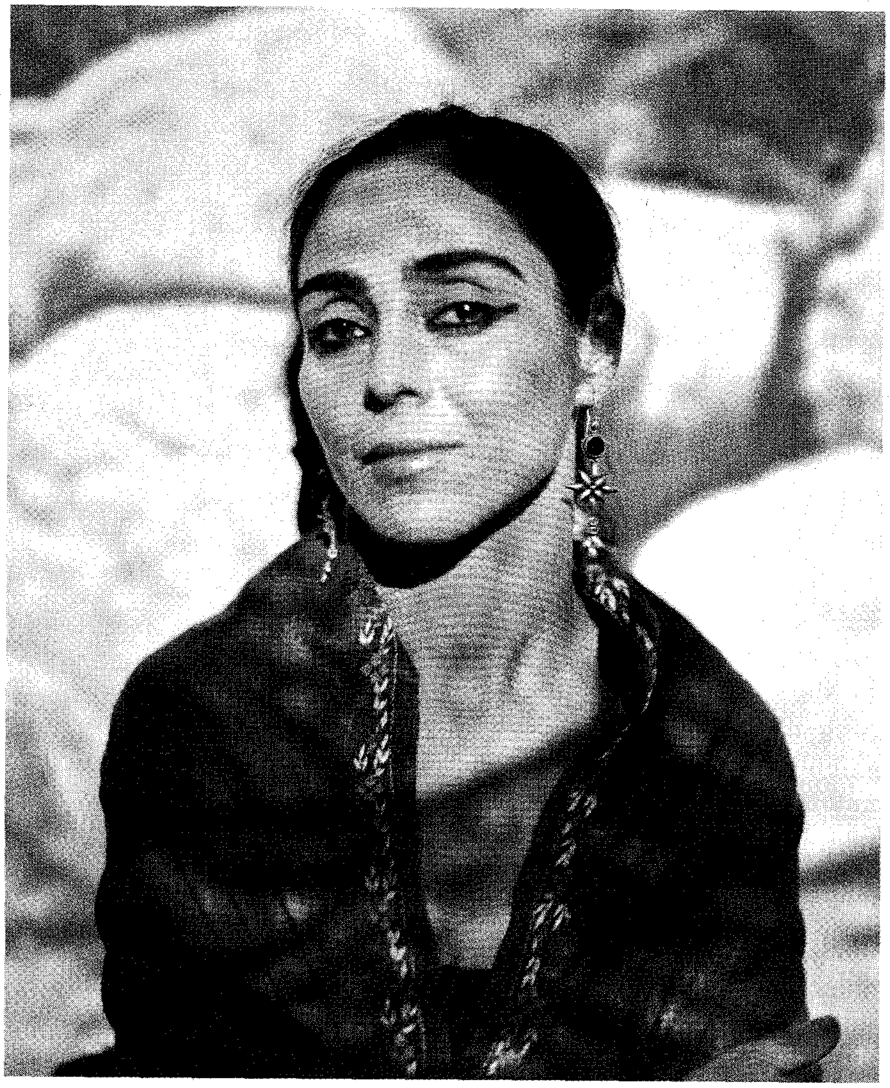
ly 70,000 nimble Merrill Lynch minds to get you there at any speed you choose.

Ask Merrill

last New York club engagement, Tom and Dick are back in town. If the brothers have become fossilized as sixties media revolutionaries, remembered mainly for anti-war barbs, pot jokes, and the counterculture hipness of their legendary short-lived television series (cancelled by a cold-footed CBS in 1969), their gig here reminds us how gloriously old school, in the best sense of the word, these two pros are, with their impeccable timing and true wit. And when was the last time you witnessed virtuosic yo-yo tricks (as performed by Tom in his guise as Yo-Yo Man)?

IRIDIUM

48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through June 10: Behind **Mose Allison's** laid-back Mississippi charm lies the mind of a killer. Lyrically dismembering hypocrites is a full-time job, but Allison somehow finds time to slip in some wonderfully eccentric piano playing alongside his honey-oozing blues drawl. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**, who celebrates his eighty-sixth birthday on June 11.



Shirin Neshat, whose video installations are on view at Barbara Gladstone.

MATTHIAS CLAMER

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—June 10: The **Howard Fishman** quartet. Led by the guitarist and singer Fishman, a Connecticut native who spent his musically formative years in New Orleans, this quartet has played such diverse locales as the Oak Room, Sardi's, and Pete's Candy Store, a neighborhood bar in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (where it has had a long-running regular Thursday-night engagement). With such an eclectic résumé, Fishman, unsurprisingly, defies easy characterization. He and his violinist, Russell Farhang, call to mind Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli, and the group, which is rounded out by a bassist and a trumpeter, produces the freshest small-group swing in the city. But their music is much more complex. The band's latest CD, "I Like You a Lot," is an affecting and haunting collection of cunning originals which shows flashes of folk, blues, and even tango. Taking a break from the back room at Pete's, the band settles in for a month of Sundays here.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 10: The exceptionally talented drummer **Leon Parker** turns the tables on us by presenting his regular boss, the pianist **Jacky Terrasson**, as a sideman in his own quartet. **Ugonna Okegwo**, the Terrason group's bassist, is also on hand, and the inclusion of the saxophonist and flutist **Steve Wilson** (heard primarily with the fine Chick Corea Origin ensemble) shakes up the mix rather nicely. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—With a consort of star-struck press and film clips and more than eighty original outfits, **"Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years"** reminds viewers of the sensuous, almost brash propriety of the "Jackie look." Through July 29. ♦ **"William Blake"** includes more than a hundred and seventy-five works by the British painter, printmaker, and poet. Through June 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—At Frank Gehry's first retrospective at the Whitney, in 1986, undulant titanium roofs and wriggling walls were nowhere in sight. The Los Angeles-based architect seemed a quirky regional figure, fond of unorthodox materials (cardboard, chain-link fencing) and given to chopping projects into multiple room-sized buildings. Nobody could have predicted that he would soon be the world's most hyped and beloved architect. This new, profoundly exhilarating show tracks Gehry's path to Bilbao, and offers working models of current projects in Scotland, Germany, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. It's too much to absorb in a single visit, but even a quick walk-through will leave visitors delighted, buoyed, amazed—and a little nostalgic for the plumb-line architecture that Gehry's fluid, crumpling planes seem poised to supplant. Through Aug. 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"BitStreams,"** the museum's survey of digitally enhanced art work, features photographs, videos, digitally designed sculptures, and a generous sampling of sound works. Through June 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

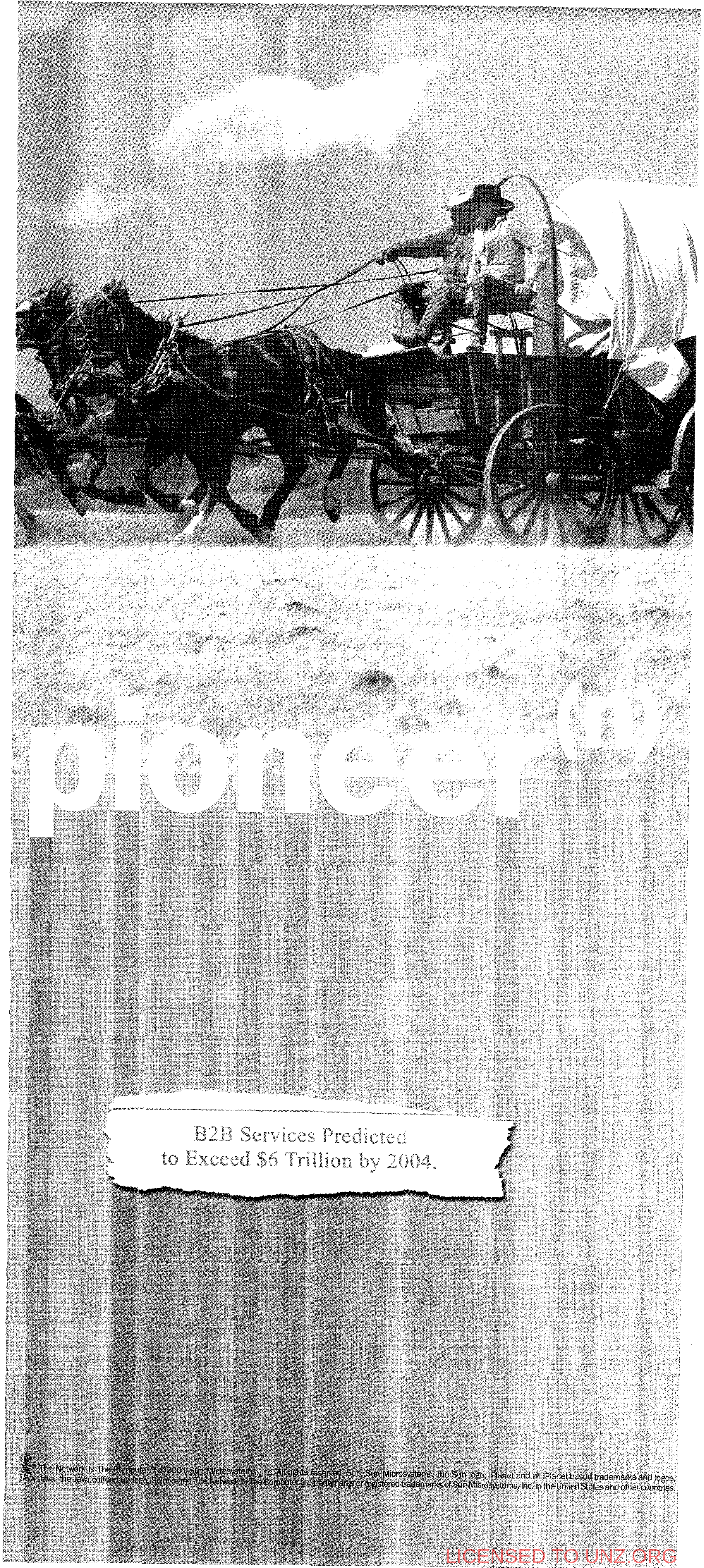
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—**"The Genomic Revolution"** is as stagy as the museum's permanent wildlife dioramas and as wired as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Throughout the dark, labyrinthine exhibit, sound bites from scientists and Everymen overlap with a soundtrack of doubt-fostering minor-key hums and beeps. The tone tends toward boosterish enthusiasm for progress, with an occasional raised eyebrow; pronouncements like "Our perception of medicine and ourselves is forever changed" are spoken within hearing range of explanations of why it might be unwise to clone Rex or Muffin. (For one thing, a calico cat with the same genes would be unlikely to have the same pattern of spots.) Touch-screen surveys tabulate visitor responses to hot-topic questions, and the museumgoers prove much more enthusiastic about genetic technologies than respondents in a recent national sample—at last count, thirty per cent of the visitors would replicate a person. Through Jan. 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Leon Golub, the dour dean of political painters, is the subject of a new retrospective, covering almost fifty years of art work. Like many careers, Golub's is U-shaped: the earliest and the most recent paintings are alike in their resolutely grim surrealism. In between, though, there are two marvellous periods. The first comes in the mid-sixties, with paintings like "Gigantomachy II," which depicts a Donnybrook among titanic combatants. The second, marked by paintings of death squads and torturers, elevated Golub's reputation in the eighties. Still-jolting pictures such as "White Squad IV (El Salvador)" show bad guys at work—and remind us whose team we're on. Through Aug. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MORGAN LIBRARY

29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—The detailed Fra Fillipo Lippi sketch and the loosely drawn Michelangelo figure study that open **"Master Drawings from the Cleveland Museum of Art"** are enough to make you wonder if the curators have goofed and put the best things first. In fact, these masterworks are just the start of the wonders in this densely packed show, a hundred and twenty images on paper, of spare elegance and informal intimacy. The insights aren't shocking—Daumier, Goya, and Thomas Hart Benton have a loose, cartoony style; Picasso fudges details; Hopper is a natural watercolorist—but the works remain thrilling. Through Aug. 19. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)



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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

PAT ADAMS
Flinty paintings that shift in scale (from twelve inches to nearly ten feet) and in mood (from stately to impish). Adams mixes acrylic paint and grit—sand, beads, crushed shells—with the dauntingly named isobutyl methacrylate (used to coat underwater cable). The resulting mottled surfaces appear simultaneously earthy and galactic. The austere terraced diagonal of "Until"—one half phosphorescent green, the other rust—dominates the front gallery. In the back, jaunty little paintings like "Close Game," whose spheres recall marbles, animate the room like students at recess. Through June 15. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

INKA ESSENHIGH
Though her neo-Surrealist paintings are as seamless and glossy as nail polish, Essenhigh's drawings, exhibited for the first time in New York, have rougher edges. Stapled, sanded, and torn, they offer a glimpse of a more candid, less certain artist. In several pictures, her squiddish homunculi look almost entirely human, and wield unexpectedly ordinary props: curlers, deodorant, an ashtray, a toothbrush. Through June 23. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

TONY SMITH
Smith the painter and Smith the sculptor (the deservedly better known of the two) are given equal weight in this exhibition, which is focussed on the years from 1960 to 1965. The canvases, black-and-white with two exceptions, suggest a hybrid of Myron Stout and Ellsworth Kelly. Their spatial ambiguity—the shifting interplay between mass and void—is elegant but looks more like problem-solving than painting. The monolithic perfection of a sculpture like "Wall"—a resolute slab of bronze resting on the gallery floor—reminds us why the sculptor won the upper hand. The handsome catalogue, which illustrates numerous works not in the show, also includes a giddily incoherent essay by the artist Richard Tuttle, who was once Smith's studio assistant. Through June 23. (Mitchell-Inness & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400.)

Short List

FERNANDO BOTERO
Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.
Through June 9.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS
C&M, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020.
Through June 9.

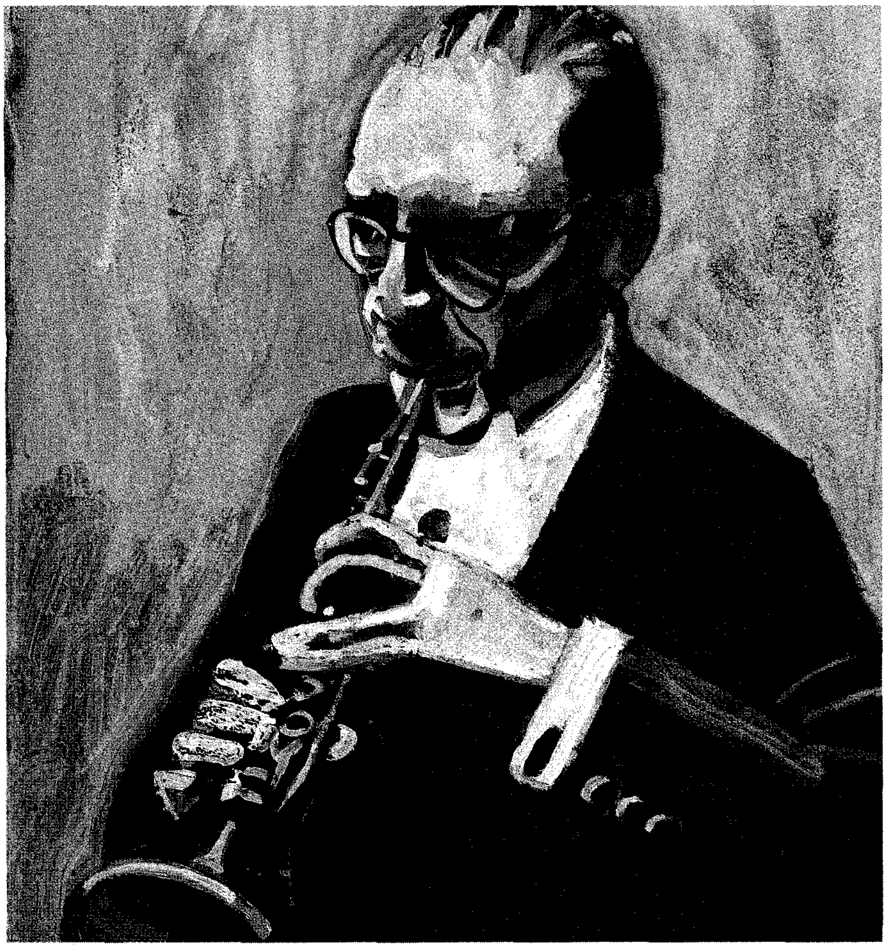
RON MUECK
James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.
Through June 16.

WAYNE THIEBAUD
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997. Through July 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ELLSWORTH KELLY
Hard-edged abstraction has the simplicity of haiku in "Relief Paintings," a series the artist has been adding to since 1954, in which pairs of monochrome panels are joined in various configurations. The three earliest—in red, yellow, and blue, respectively—are installed together in the sunlit front gallery. Each is a subtle triumph, with one panel nearly flush with the wall and the other raised several inches. Stare long enough and a neat optical trick occurs: the shadow cast on the first by the second melts into a Barnett Newman zip. Through June 29. (Matthew Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

SHIRIN NESHAT
Islam serves as the backdrop for three oracular video installations by an artist with a flair for melodrama. The most powerful, "Possessed," reads as an allegory for an artist's life: a gaudily dressed, wild-eyed woman with hair to match wanders around a town square, climbs up on a stage, whips the more conservatively attired citizens into a frenzy, and then wanders off unnoticed in the melee. The most ambitious film, "Passage," is overblown, with a Philip Glass score that could pass for John Williams, but it contains one unforgettable image—a circle of chador-shrouded women digging a hole in a synchronized frenzy so intense you may crave a Xanax. Through June 29. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)



The oboist Bert Lucarelli, with the Leontovitch String Quartet, opens the Music Mountain season on June 10 (see Classical).

ANDREA VENTURA

CHRISTOPHER WOOL
Some of Wool's new paintings are loose, handsome spray-painted scribbles—they could have been made by a graffiti artist limbering up. Others feature exactly the same scribbles, in a photo-silk-screened version. Still others are combinations of the two: a freehand gesture and its Warholian duplicate. The results have a lukewarm charm: neither an affirmation of painting nor a resignation to pessimism, they amount to a sort of calculated waffling. Through June 16. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100.)

Short List

BRENDA GOODMAN
Howard Scott, 529 W. 20th St. 646-486-7004.
Through June 9.

GLENN LIGON
D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.
Through June 9.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

JAMES ENSOR
Spellbinding drawings by a Belgian artist with a penchant for the macabre. The show focusses on the artist's most prolific years, between 1880 and 1900. Early works include deft copies of drawings by Delacroix and Daumier (with whom Ensor shared a passion for biting satire) and dark interiors where the domestic quietly gives way to the demonic. Barely visible figures lurk in curtains or under a piano—figments drawn out of a dream and onto the page. Elsewhere, "Where's Waldo" meets Hieronymus Bosch in creepy crowd scenes packed with ghouls. Through July 21. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

SIGALIT LANDAU
A venerable nonprofit space sweetens the bitter pill of its closing—this will be the last show—with an installation that transforms the front of the gallery into a giant cotton-candy machine. A curving, Goog-like ramp that serves as the entrance also circumscribes a massive drum filled with what looks like pink sand. The Israeli-born artist Landau spins her confections every day at 4, but if you miss it don't worry. Just grab a seat (well, a sack of sugar) in the back room and watch the video replay. Through June 9. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

Short List

HIRO YAMAGATA
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 235-5554. Through July 28.

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
June 6-7 at 10:15 A.M and 2: The collection of the Washington, D.C., hotelier Marshall B. Coyne. Included is an abundant selection of porcelain, furniture, bronzes (featuring a number of works by the French sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye), paintings of country life (by such artists as Bonheur and Stubbs), and a Louis XV-style tulipwood marquetry grand piano, with the case designed by François Linke

and the works by Steinway & Sons. ♦ June 7 at 2:30: Art celebrating the world of horses and the hunt. Paintings by the British artist Sir Alfred James Munnings (1878-1959) stand above the rest: his represented work ranges from the elegantly atmospheric "The Young Entry, A Snowy Road, Woolsthorpe," with its swirls of brown, white, and blue, to more formal paintings in the tradition of Stubbs. ♦ June 12 at 10:15 A.M.: Antiquities from Europe, Egypt, and the Middle East, along with Islamic art. A marble portrait head of the Roman emperor Trajan, circa 98-117 A.D., is a feature of the sale. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
June 6 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of coins. ♦ June 7 at 10 A.M.: Decorative art works, principally from the twentieth century, by such artists as Noguchi, Tiffany, and William Morris. ♦ June 8 at 10 A.M. and 2: Antiquities from the Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman worlds; an Attic red-figured stamnos of Theseus dispatching the Minotaur is a highlight of the sale. ♦ June 11 at 2: The Surena collection of ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals. Among the selections is a large obsidian Kassite seal of a groom with two horses, estimated to sell for up to a hundred thousand dollars. ♦ June 12 at 10 A.M. and 2: Fine jewelry. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CHRISTIE'S EAST
June 6 at 10 A.M.: Twentieth-century decorative arts. ♦ June 11 at 1: A sale of antique jewelry and fine modern jewelry. ♦ June 12 at 10 A.M.: Printed books. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

PHILLIPS
June 11 at 2: "Pioneers of American Modernism," an auction featuring furniture and household objects by designers from the nineteen-twenties to the present day, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, Dale Chihuly, and many others. Among the more fanciful creations is a collection of German travelling bar kits, retailed in New York circa 1928, encased in the forms of miniature airplanes and zeppelins. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ANTHONY GOICOLEA
The shadow of "Lord of the Flies" lingers over this collection of digitally altered prints, even though the artist has cast himself as every character in every staged scene. Subjects include two adolescents licking a fogged window on a rainy day and a pack of parochial-school students eating their comrades' flesh. While Goicolea's impressions of untapped violence and budding sexuality can be creepy and grotesque, they are nevertheless funny, and even poignant. Through June 9. (Rare, 435 W. 14th St. 645-5591.)

DIANA MICHENER
"The Wrestlers" stars a nude man and woman struggling, with their jaws clenched and their flesh rippling and flopping. The photographer, currently the subject of a retrospective at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, in Paris, has built her career on sumptuous prints of decapitated cows' heads and deformed fetuses in formaldehyde, eviscerated corpses, nude self-portraits involving lots of mud, and lyrical reënactments of the story of Leda and the swan. Her new series is more classically beautiful; the photographs recall ancient Greek sculpture, both in their attention to anatomy in motion and in their graininess, which makes the skin read like marble—except for the extreme hairiness of the male model. Through June 28. (Pace MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW / KETAKI SHETH / PAMELA SINGH
Sepia, which concentrates on Southeast Asian photography, has been showing a lot of serious black-and-white landscape and documentary images. In this exhibit of work by three Indian women, Matthew uses her Chinese Holga camera to blast scenes of Indian life with light leaks and focus warps, and Singh documents children and European tourists rambling among the ruins of Angkor Wat. Sheth's scorched Bombay streets, full of elegant women and children busily preparing for rituals, are shot with startling energy and drama. Her simpler, more recent images, of twins of all ages carefully posed under banana trees or astride their bicycles, intensify her fixation with depth of expression—everything rests on her subjects' eyes. Through June 16. (148 W. 24th St. 645-9444.)

SETON SMITH
An air-traffic-control tower seen from below, a cliff jutting out of the sea, two horses grazing in a misty field—these inscrutable fragments look like film stills from a dream, if you dream in color. Any attempt to connect the dots, to construct a kind of narrative, (a daring jailbreak at dawn? a family trip reconstructed from memory?) is fruitless; the contexts of the pictures are locked up, and their meanings with them. The photographer's father, Tony Smith, who has a solo show at Mitchell-Inness & Nash, would approve of the artfully spare compositions. Through June 23. (Winston Wächter Mayer, 39 E. 78th St. 327-2526.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Kiki Smith's "Telling Tales" and Hans Bellmer's oddly assembled dolls remain at the Center's Midtown space through June 10. ♦ Mary Ellen Mark's "American Odyssey" will be the last show in the Uptown galleries, which close with it on June 17. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

LUCIEN AIGNER
Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.
Through June 16.

JAMES CASEBERE
Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 239-1181.
Through June 16.

LUIS GONZALEZ PALMA
Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St.
989-7600. Through June 30.

LUCIEN HERVÉ / EZRA STOLLER
Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.
Through June 23.

NADAV KANDER
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through June 23.

WILLIAM KLEIN
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.
Through June 9.

KATHERINE TURCZAN
Gallery 24, at 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.
Through July 20.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

DICAPO OPERA THEATRE
An evening of scenes (with orchestral accompaniment) from operas by Mozart, Rossini ("La Cenerentola"), Offenbach, Verdi, and Puccini ("La Rondine"), performed by members of the company's Young Artists Program. Elaine Rinaldi conducts. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 288-9438. June 3 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur ends his penultimate season as music director the same way he began it, conducting music by Richard Strauss, sung by a Dame of the British Empire. Back in September, Kiri Te Kanawa was the guest soprano; now it's Felicity Lott—a less glamorous but more subtle interpreter of German lieder—who sings the "Four Last Songs," the meltingly beautiful and visionary works with which Strauss ended his long career. The rest of the program belongs to the fiery younger Strauss, the composer of the tone poems "Don Juan," "Till Eulenspiegel," and "Death and Transfiguration." (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. June 7-9 at 8.)

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NEW YORK CITY LABOR CHORUS
Members of two dozen union locals make up this group, which devotes itself to advancing the cause of working people through song. To celebrate its tenth anniversary, the chorus presents a gala concert at Town Hall, with the folksingers Pete Seeger and Pat Humphries as special guests. (123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. June 7 at 7:30.)

MANHATTAN PHILHARMONIC
During the Nazi occupation of Greece in the Second World War, a teen-age boy named Mikis Theodorakis saw a German film in which Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, that ultimate hymn to universal brotherhood, was performed. The experience inspired him to be a composer, and he has gone on to produce a substantial body of music in a firmly populist classical style; his recent orchestral works combine the dissonant, polyrhythmic techniques of Stravinsky and Shostakovich with distinctively Hellenic melodies. (He is still best known, however, for his score to the 1964 film "Zorba the Greek.") Conductor Peter Tiboris has selected Beethoven's Ninth to share the program with the American première of Theodorakis's "Rhapsody for Cello," performed by Zuill Bailey. The concert also features the singers Mariana Rigaki, Angelica Cathariou, Dorji Ciren, and Ricardo Herrera and an ensemble of choruses from across the the country. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 10 at 3.) ♦ As a prelude, the Cornell professor Gail Holst-Warhaft gives a lecture on the composer's solo vocal music at the Onassis Cultural Center, with the baritone Constantinos Yiannoudes and the pianist Yannis Xylas performing excerpts from Theodorakis's song cycles. (Olympic Tower Atrium, 645 Fifth Ave. June 7 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY
Anthony Korf's "Old Radio" (which features the pianist Jan Gottlieb Jiracek, a standout at the 1997 Van Cliburn Competition) overlaps a variety of jazz and classical styles to put the listener on an imaginary car trip, listening to the sounds of radio stations coming in and then fading away—a metaphor for other kinds of loss. George Rothman conducts the première of the work, along with symphonies by Beethoven and Honegger. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. June 7 at 8.)

BROOKLYN YOUTH CHORUS
With the widespread decline in music education during the past two decades, the presence of such a thriving and accomplished group as this—one that brings classical music to audiences that might not otherwise hear it—is a sign of hope. The centerpiece of the chorus's final concerts of the season is its first commissioned work, "Heyoka Te Deum" (which uses both Catholic and Lakota texts), by James MacMillan, one of Britain's most exciting and accessible young composers. Works by Mendelssohn, Purcell, and Palestrina, as well as folk music and standards, fill out the program. (St. Augustine Church, 116 Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. 718-243-9447. June 9 at 3 and 7:30.)

RECITALS

LOCRIAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
Until recently, the Japanese composer Jo Kondo (b. 1947) was one of the best-kept secrets of the new-music world; this group, which only plays music written in the ten years leading up to a concert, gives the American premières of works by both Kondo and John Tavener ("My Gaze Is Ever Upon You," for two violins and bass), along with music by Chris Theofanides and others. (Christ Chapel, Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. June 7 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 7-8 at 7:30: Piano trios by Shostakovich, Rachmaninoff, and Beethoven (the "Archduke"), played by the pianist Gail Niwa, the violinist Alexandre Brussilovsky, and the cellist Sophie Shao. ♦ June 9 at 7:30 and June 10 at 4: Music by Mozart, Dohnányi, and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in C Minor), performed by the pianist Frederic Chiu, the cellist Peter Wiley, and others. (Fulton Ferry Landing. 718-624-2083.)

ISAAC STERN CHAMBER-MUSIC WORKSHOP
The fifth workshop for outstanding young ensembles from around the world culminates in three public concerts, given by the three groups chosen by a panel of distinguished instrumentalists; the repertory will include classic works by Beethoven, Berg, Fauré, and others. (Carnegie Hall. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 247-7800. June 9 at 12, 3, and 7:30.)

NAMJILYN NOROVBANZAD
Mongolian "long songs" are complex, lyrical effusions, ranging in subject matter from religion and philosophy to love of family and the natural world. The singer, Mongolia's most prominent performing artist, makes her U.S. début at Symphony Space, accompanied by an ensemble of folk musicians. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. June 10 at 8.)

ETHOS PERCUSSION GROUP
In its final concert of the season, the group offers music by John Cage ("Second Construction," from 1940), premières by John LaBarbera and Simon Shaheen, and a selection of traditional Arab music, performed with special guest artists. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 11 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
This venerable concert series may not draw the big crowds that Tanglewood, its behemoth neighbor to the north on Route 7, regularly does, but its dedication to preserving the art of the string quartet in an acoustically superb rural setting has earned it a special place in the ranks of summer festivals. The Leontovitch Quartet, a distinguished Ukrainian group that has played here every summer since 1988, opens the seventy-second season with the oboist Bert Lucarelli as its guest; the program includes string quartets by Brahms and Haydn (the potent Op. 74, No. 1 Quartet, in C Major) along with works for oboe and strings by Mozart (the Oboe Quartet in F Major), Finzi, and Donizetti (a fantasia on themes from the tragedy "Lucrezia Borgia"). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 10 at 3. The series runs through Sept. 2.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
June 6 at 7:30: By Melvin Jules Bukiet, from his new novel, "Strange Fire." (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) ♦ June 6 at 7:30: By Ruth Knafo Setton, from her novel "The Road to Fez." With the pianist and guitarist Yoel Ben-Simhon. (Makor, 35 W. 67th St. 601-1000.) ♦ June 6 at 8: By William McGowan, from his forthcoming novel, "Digital Black"; by Victoria Redel, from her latest work of fiction, "Loverboy"; and by Michael Parker, from his new novel, "Towns Without Rivers." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

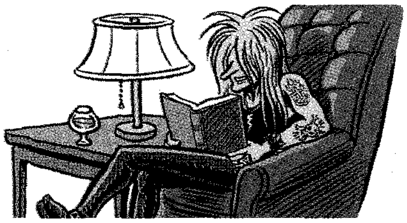
TALKS
June 6 at 6: Brendan Sexton, a former commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation, moderates a discussion on the future of the recently closed Fresh Kills landfill with Mulugetta Birru, the executive director of Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority; Marc Matsil, of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; and others. (Urban Center, Madison Ave. at 51st St. For reservations, which are required, call 935-3960.) ♦ June 6 at 6:30: Water-tank builders, construction workers, and pigeon fliers tell stories about working along the New York City skyline. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400.) ♦ June 12 at 8: Charlie Rose interviews former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

TOUR
June 9-10 at 12:15: The storyteller Regina Ress points out the historical relationship between roses and culture on a stroll through the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden, which is currently in peak bloom. (New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park. 718-817-8700.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Full Metal Racket

"We were all small-town dysfunctional losers who somehow became rock stars." So muses Nikki Sixx, bassist for Mötley Crüe, the eighties heavy-metal band remembered as much for its herculean substance abuse, celebrity trophy wives, and studded-leather codpieces as for the airwave-clogging success of such fist-pumping anthems as "Dr. Feelgood."



Sixx—who once overdosed on heroin, was revived, and then shot up again the next day—and his bandmates (Vince Neil, Mick Mars, and Tommy Lee) tell of their modest origins, their highs and lows, and their deep affection for Jacuzzis and baby-oil wrestling in **MÖTLEY CRÜE: THE DIRT** (Regan/HarperCollins), edited by the rock critic Neil Strauss.

Chuck Klosterman was a small-town loser, too, but he chose a somewhat tamer path than the Crüe did. In **FARGO ROCK CITY** (Scribner), his evocative memoir of growing up in North Dakota dreaming of having hair like Sixx's, Klosterman—who eventually became a music writer—confesses that Mötley Crüe's album "Shout at the Devil" was his "Sgt. Pepper's." Klosterman sets his coming-of-age story against various metal landmarks—Van Halen's "Jump" reaching No. 1, Def Leppard's drummer losing an arm in an auto accident, the fateful meeting of Axl Rose and Slash—and insists that "all that poofy, sexist, shallow glam rock *was* important."

Susan Fast, a professor of music, might agree. **IN THE HOUSES OF THE HOLY** (forthcoming from Oxford) is Fast's in-depth examination of the founding fathers of heavy-metal music, Led Zeppelin. Arguing that Led Zep isn't just greasy kid stuff, Fast connects the bombastic British quartet to Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the "carnivalesque" and analyzes "Dazed and Confused"—a perennial favorite of headbangers everywhere—as "rich text."

—Mark Rozzo

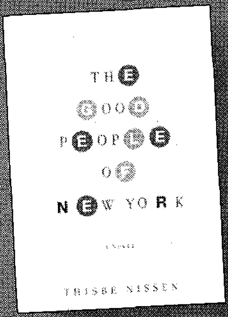
DOUG ALLEN

bel canto
Ann Patchett

ARIA

An American opera diva and her biggest fan, a Japanese CEO, are among those taken hostage at a South American embassy party. Like an operatic libretto, they bridge the chasm of cultures and encounter love, passion and violence along the way.

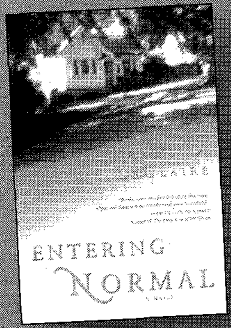
BEL CANTO
by Ann Patchett
Pub. Price: $25.00
Our Price: $20.00
Readers' Advantage Price: $18.00



APPLE

The union of Roz, a brash New York Jew, and Edwin, a soft-spoken Nebraskan, produces Miranda. When Roz's love of her daughter grows intensely fierce, it takes the many New York characters in their lives to reveal the dimensions of their strong but screwy bond.

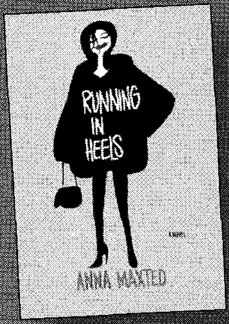
THE GOOD PEOPLE OF NEW YORK
by Thisbe Nissen
Pub. Price: $23.00
Our Price: $18.40
Readers' Advantage Price: $16.56



ALLIES

Mourning the death of her teenaged son, Rose is drawn into the life of her neighbor Opal, a young mother of a five year old. When Opal faces a custody battle for her son, both women rediscover the power of hope and friendship.

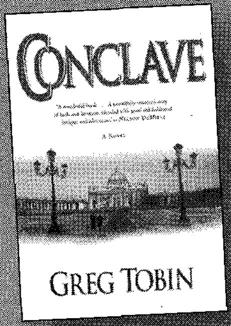
ENTERING NORMAL
by Anne D. LeClaire
Pub. Price: $24.00
Our Price: $19.20
Readers' Advantage Price: $17.28



ALONE

In the wake of her best friend's nuptials, Natalie confronts the crises of her life alone, from embarrassing job screw-ups to a sexy but bad-news boyfriend. But when things really spin out of control, it takes her best friend to help her see what's really important.

RUNNING IN HEELS
by Anna Maxted
Pub. Price: $25.00
Our Price: $20.00
Readers' Advantage Price: $18.00



ABSOLUTION

An American priest may be named the next pope. While he has earned the respect of bishops around the world, he has also attracted enemies who seek to destroy him by exposing the sins of his past. His faith may prove his most powerful weapon.

CONCLAVE
by Greg Tobin
Pub. Price: $25.95
Our Price: $20.76
Readers' Advantage Price: $18.68

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MOVIES OPENING

THE ANNIVERSARY PARTY
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening June 8.

BRIDE OF THE WIND
A bio-pic of Alma Mahler Werfel, a Viennese woman who became an accomplished composer, the wife of Gustav Mahler and Walter Gropius, and a refugee from Nazi Germany. Bruce Beresford directed. Opening June 8.

DEAD OR ALIVE
A three-way war erupts between the police and rival gangs in this yakuza action picture directed by Takashi Miike. In Japanese. Opening June 8. (Cinema Village.)

DIVIDED WE FALL
Jan Hrebejk directed this drama based on the true story of a Czech husband and wife who hid a Jewish boy in their home during the Second World War. In Czech and German. Opening June 8.

EVOLUTION
Rapidly evolving alien life-forms wreak havoc on Earth in a comedy directed by Ivan Reitman. With David Duchovny, Julianne Moore, and Orlando Jones. Opening June 8.

SWORDFISH
Dominic Sena ("Gone in 60 Seconds") directed this thriller about a spy (John Travolta) who must coerce a computer hacker (Hugh Jackman) into stealing government funds. With Halle Berry and Don Cheadle. Opening June 8.

THE WIDE BLUE ROAD
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening June 6. (Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

THE ANNIVERSARY PARTY
Alan Cumming as a charming but volatile bisexual writer who is about to direct a big-budget movie; Jennifer Jason Leigh as a neurotic actress who screws up her roles by turning everything into tragedy. In Los Angeles, they throw an anniversary party, invite their friends, get tanked, and then take Ecstasy, at which point everything begins to fall apart. Cumming and Jason Leigh wrote and directed this house-party picture together, and shot it quickly in digital video with various real-life friends and colleagues (Kevin Kline, Phoebe Cates, Gwyneth Paltrow, Parker Posey). The movie has the kind of intensity that actors love—scenes of confrontation, breakdown, and self-revelation—but it's neither well-constructed nor particularly original.—*David Denby* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Empire 25, and Union Square.)

AMORES PERROS
The début directorial effort of Alejandro González Iñárritu gives you a pretty good idea of what life is like in Mexico City and an enduring wish never to drive its streets at rush hour. The first section chronicles the near-incestuous affair between Octavio (Gael García Bernal) and his sister-in-law Susana (Vanessa Bauche). The second, which sags with weary symbolism, is about a model who loses a leg. The third and strongest tells of an ex-terrorist and tramp (Emilio Echevarría). The connective tissue between these folks is a car crash, and each of them also either owns or trains dogs. Iñárritu's style may be heated and hectic, but he doesn't bully you into judging these frazzled figures, and, in Echevarría, he has found a figure of great and grimy nobility. In Spanish.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/2/01.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

BLOW
The story of George Jung, a Massachusetts man who sold the Medellín cartel's cocaine to mainstream America in the seventies, would seem to offer a perfect star vehicle for Johnny Depp, but the unconvincing narrative doesn't allow him to shape a performance. The scenes are flimsily staged—thin and underdone. Now and then the director, Ted Demme, resorts to a rapid montage of shots meant to convey the giddy drug life, but this isn't directing; it's more like flinging a loosely pasted scrapbook onto the floor and asking the audience to sort it out.—*D.D.* (4/9/01) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.)

BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY
Helen Fielding's creation has finally arrived onscreen; in place of her wiry, worried tone we now find an almost confident pleasure in mishaps and man-hunting. The director, Sharon Maguire, has shaped the fretful original into a basic romantic comedy, leaving an aching Bridget (Renée Zellweger) with a choice of nice Mr. Darcy (Colin Firth) or dastardly Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant). These three leads are much better than the movie they front; some of the secondary characters are dangerously thin, although Jim Broadbent is as crumpled and reliable as ever in the role of our heroine's dad. Bridget mania, meanwhile, shows no signs of abating, but one hopes that this film might herald the end of the affair; after all, self-pity has its limitations as the engine of drama, and the idea that a young woman might be not just unhappy but somehow incomplete without a man would have struck even Jane Austen as laughably passé.—*A.L.* (4/16/01) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE CENTER OF THE WORLD
Explicit, eyeglass-fogging sexual games from the director Wayne Wang. A nerdy, rich Silicon Valley computer engineer, Richard (Peter Sarsgaard), pays a beautiful freckle-faced stripper, Florence (Molly Parker), to accompany him to Las Vegas for a three-day weekend. Richard is paying, but he wants feeling and emotion; Florence wants nothing but control. The movie, shot with a hand-held digital camera, has a dreamy surface and the aura of a reverie, but there's also a bit of suspense floating in the erotic cloud: Will Richard get Florence to respond to him? A friend of Florence's named Jerri (Carla Gugino), her opposite in every way, threatens to take the movie to a dangerous place, but she storms off, leaving the two inarticulate principals to mop up.—*D.D.* (4/23 & 30/01) (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

CHARADE
A debonair macabre thriller—romantic, scary, satisfying. "How do you shave in there?" Audrey Hepburn asks, putting her finger up to the cleft in Cary Grant's chin. (She's trying to seduce a legend.) This piece of high-style kitsch, directed by Stanley Donen, is as enjoyable in its way as "The Big Sleep." Yet it was widely panned when it came out in 1963; the mixed tones of comedy and grisliness seemed to offend the press. The setting is Paris. Hepburn is a young widow who is stalked by the mourners at her husband's funeral. With Walter Matthau, and James Coburn, George Kennedy, and Ned Glass as scheming thugs. The score is by Henry Mancini; Hepburn's clothes are by Givenchy.—*Pauline Kael* (The Screening Room; June 8-9.)

THE CIRCLE
Anonymous women on the streets of Teheran crouch alongside cars to avoid police, dart down alleys, and flee from dangerous places with black chadors held over their heads, as if flying under dark wings. At first we may be puzzled by the frenetic rushing about, but after a while we realize that this is exactly the point. These women have either spent time in prison or are heading straight there, and they are looking for a place to hide in a society in which single women have no more than provisional legitimacy as citizens. The director, Jafar Panahi, offers echoes of the Italian neorealist cinema in the general forlornness and pained humanism of his approach, but he's created aesthetic strategies all his own. Despite a longueur here and there, the cumulative power of "The Circle" is extraordinary. In Farsi.—*D.D.* (4/23 & 30/01) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE GOLDEN BOWL
Henry James made easy—no small task, given the complications of the plot. Prince Amerigo (Jeremy Northam) marries Maggie Verver (Kate Beckinsale), whose father, Adam Verver (Nick Nolte), then marries Maggie's friend Charlotte Stant (Uma Thurman). No one has a clue what anyone else is up to, let alone what happened before the marriage craze set in. In the book, such innocence seems like one of the infinite velleities of its atmosphere; onscreen, you have half a mind to slap the characters awake. This is a Merchant-Ivory production, so it looks as luscious as ever, though the actors display an unaccustomed shudder of neurosis; the honorable exception is Nick Nolte, who gives a growling depth to his depiction of the self-made man. Not much happens, although it is cunningly camouflaged as excess; why have a boring party, the film suggests, when you can make it a costume party and have people wear suits of armor?—*A.L.* (5/7/01) (Paris.)

A KNIGHT'S TALE
There's some great medieval action in Brian Helgeland's second film—essentially the story of a commoner (Heath Ledger) who competes for the love of a lady (Shannyn Sossamon). Ledger has golden-boy good looks that make it easy to cheer him on, and the film is given a modern gloss with an insistent rock-anthem score. But hokey dialogue and uninspired situations weigh everything down. It's fun enough, but only joust.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE LUZHIN DEFENCE
After the stream-of-consciousness rigors of Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway," the director Marleen Gorris tackles the endgames and head games of Vladimir Nabokov's chess novel. John Turturro plays the titular Russian prodigy, and he gives his emotionally catatonic character a slouchy, innocent physical charm. As the countess who loves Luzhin, Emily Watson is all eyes and smiles. Together, the two actors combine for a few clever gambits, but it's mostly a muted affair.—*Michael Agger* (First & 62nd Cinemas and The Screening Room.)

MEMENTO
Guy Pearce plays Leonard, a former insurance investigator who has mislaid his short-term memory; leave the room and come back ten minutes later, and he won't remember you. To help his case, and to solve the apparent murder of his wife, Leonard tattoos himself with memoranda and drives around the lowlier districts of L.A. County. At the same time, he has a couple of acquaintances (Carrie-Anne Moss and Joe Pantoliano) who use his condition for their own unscrupulous ends. There is a fine, despairing comedy to these events—not just in our fidgety hero but in the constant thwarting of our need to know. The young British writer and director Christopher Nolan, who has every intention of putting us through the mill, doubles his fun by running the whole story backward.—*A.L.* (3/19/01) (Angelika Film Center, Astor Plaza, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

MOULIN ROUGE
A frantically ambitious postmodernist musical in which no single song is performed from beginning to end and no dance number is staged without the dancers' movements being kaleidoscoped into a dozen angles. Set in a stylized and digitalized Paris, the movie offers the Moulin Rouge night club as a seething Belle Époque Studio 54, where a fresh-

GAHAN WILSON

from-the-provinces poet named Christian (Ewan McGregor) falls in love with Satine (Nicole Kidman), a consumptive cancan dancer and courtesan. The story is no more than a flimsy outline, but it still manages to combine the Orpheus myth and "Camille" and to vaguely evoke about a dozen other films. When the lovers sing a duet they begin with a few bars of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" and pass through bits of Phil Collins, U2, and David Bowie and Brian Eno before capping it off with Elton John's "Your Song." It's as if the director, Baz Luhrmann, felt that he could hold the target audience of young people only by making reference to their entire experience of pop music. Luhrmann has a talent for décor, sudden shifts in perspective, and gentle, twinkling nighttime effects, but he whips much of the movie into an opéra-bouffe clownishness.—*D.D.* (5/28/01) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

THE MUMMY RETURNS

A huge popular success, but harder to follow than "Memento," whose story runs backward, or "The Circle," which is in Farsi. It has something to do with cursed tombs and the return of legions of mummies, but the plot is gibberish, the action is garbled, and there is such a superfluity of prancing creatures, devil-eyed villains, and roiling clouds of digital dust that one can only respond to it as a series of random sensations. Call it camp without jokes. Directed by the shlockmeister Steven Sommers. With Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz as the married adventurer-archeologist team and the wrestler Dwayne Johnson, known as the Rock, who emerges in all his glory at the movie's end wearing giant crab claws.—*D.D.* (5/28/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

PEARL HARBOR

At three hours, the new Michael Bay film lasts longer than the historical event it purports to describe; this will strike most viewers as an ominous precedent, especially if Bay starts to get interested in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. Ben Affleck and Josh Hartnett star as a couple of boyhood friends—one bumptious, the other shy—who join the Air Force together, play aerial chicken together, and even fall in love with the same girl (Kate Beckinsale). They also manage to get a couple of planes airborne and knock out some Japanese Zeros, a feat that is no less noble for being untroubled by historical fact. The movie feels big and baggy rather than epic, and, by the end, the stitching has come apart; you never quite believe in the spate of digital effects, let alone in the weaving of war and romance. The final forty-five minutes—an account of the near-suicidal Doolittle Raid on Tokyo in the spring of 1942—are at once stirring and wholly superfluous. With Alec Baldwin, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Jon Voight, who rises manfully to his feet in the role of F.D.R.—*A.L.* (6/4/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Chelsea West, Cinema I, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, and Union Square.)

SHE DONE HIM WRONG

Mae West, the great shady lady of the screen, wiggles and sings "Easy Rider" and seduces virtuous young Cary Grant. A classic comedy and a classic seduction. Written by the star, from her play "Diamond Lil"; directed by Lowell Sherman; originally released in 1933.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; June 9.)

SHREK

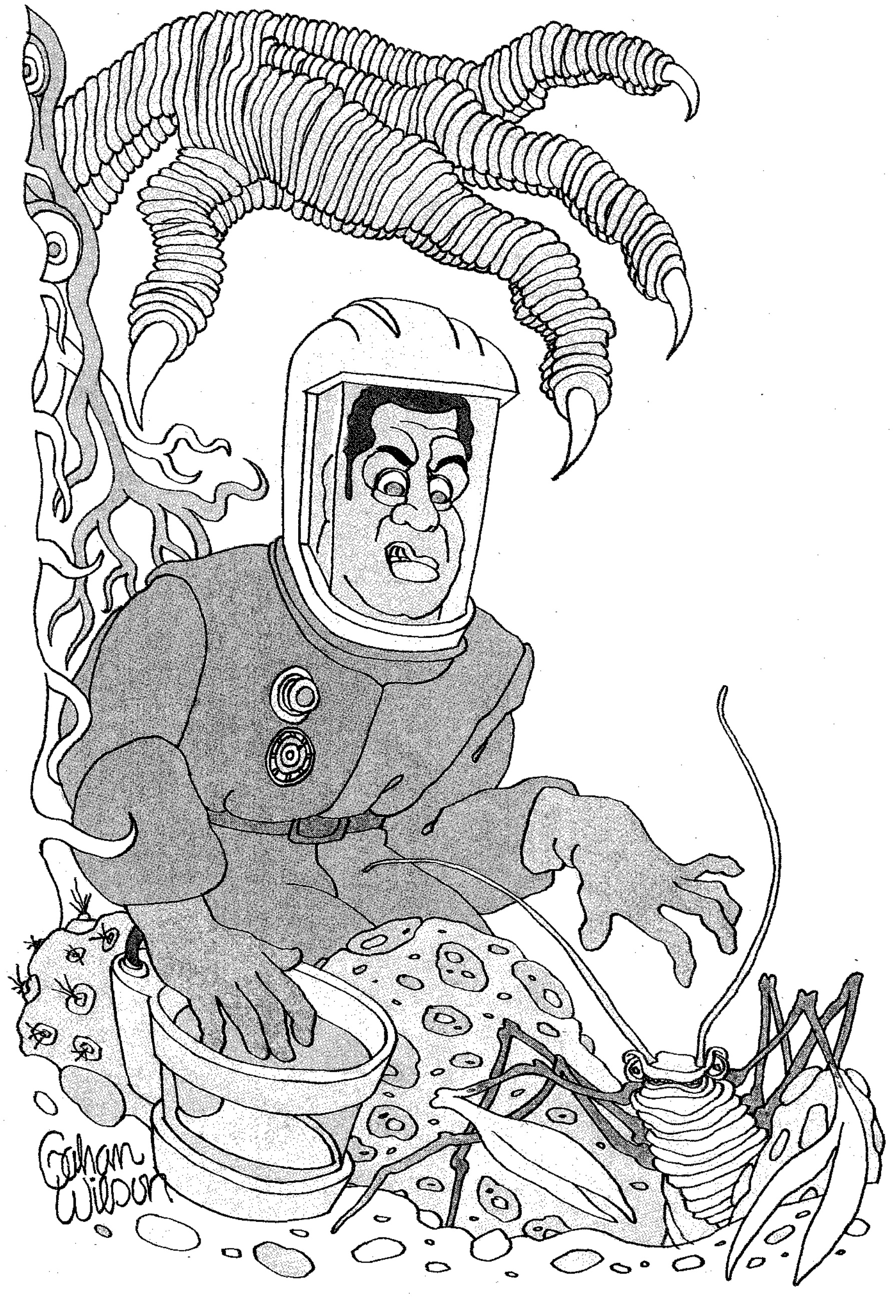
The Shrek of the title is a bile-green ogre with disgusting personal habits and, this being an animated feature, an essential sweetness of nature. On the orders of a wicked lord, he rescues a princess from a dragon, only to screw up the plans by falling in love with her. The new DreamWorks production is overtly snook-cocking, turning every available fairy tale on its head: the princess has a short temper and karate skills, the dragon has the hots for a donkey, and the lord's castle is as tacky as a theme park. On the other hand, the film itself is hardly rough and real; however cunning the rendering of surfaces, there's still something flat and charmless in the digital look, and most of the pleasure rises not from the main romance but from the quick, incidental gags. In particular, look out for the Three Little Breakdancing Pigs. With voices by Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, and John Lithgow.—*A.L.* (5/21/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinema, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

STARTUP.COM

A fascinating cinéma-vérité documentary account of how two very young men—Kaleil Isaza Tuzman, a Goldman, Sachs employee, and Tom Herman, a techie—started an Internet company in New York, burned through sixty million dollars, lost their way, and got swallowed up by another company, all within eighteen months. The filmmakers Jehane Noujaim and Chris Hegedus nosed their way into meetings and arguments and drove around with the two men as they aired their desires and fears. Tuzman is burly and handsome, with an easy, ready way about him; Herman, who keeps growing and shaving a dark beard, is high-minded and tends to be diffident about the fate of the enterprise itself. The two men emerge from the fiasco without any money but with their friendship intact. The movie's account of their dealings with each other is painfully funny and very intimate, perhaps too much so: it would have been useful to have more detail about how the business actually worked and why it went wrong.—*D.D.* (5/14/01) (Film Forum.)

UNDER THE SAND

A fine new feature from the French director François Ozon: his quietest creation to date, but also his most provocative. Charlotte Rampling plays Marie, whose husband disappears from a beach; everyone but Marie believes him dead, and Ozon finds both method and madness in her noble refusal to meet the truth. What could have been glum or morbid is made almost thrilling by Ozon's ruthless cuts and punchy compositions, and Rampling sways back and forth between the litheness of youth and the fallen hopes of middle age. The ending, suitably enough, is too mysterious for words. With Bruno Cremer as the missing man. In French.—*A.L.* (5/21/01) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)



Opening June 8, "Evolution," a comedy directed by Ivan Reitman.

THE WIDE BLUE ROAD

In 1957, almost a decade before he made the classic revolutionary epic "The Battle of Algiers," Gillo Pontecorvo directed this fervent melodrama set on a small Italian island. Yves Montand, who was born in Italy, returns to his homeland in the role of Squarciò, an outlaw fisherman. Squarciò has made himself relatively prosperous by illegally killing the fish with little bombs rather than catching them with nets. He won't truckle to the law and make peace with his friends (who both adore and fear him). The movie turns into a kind of ambivalent Communist elegy for an egotistical individualist who could never fit into the utopia. The village fishermen, we're told, will form themselves into a commune, and everything will be fine. Written by Franco Solinas. With Alida Valli and Francisco Rabal. In Italian.—*D.D.* (Film Forum.)

WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY. . .

A smart new horror story, at once thrilling and upsetting, from the director Dominik Moll. Michel (Laurent Lucas), a typically fretful father on vacation with his wife and children, meets an old schoolmate named Harry (Sergi López), who promptly starts changing Michel's life for the better. This entails buying him a new car and then getting to work on his ornery parents, his tired wife, and his frustrated ambitions as a writer. You can't really fault Harry's logic, and that's what makes him so daunting; his analysis of Michel's messy existence would do for just about anyone. It's his homicidal methods that somehow feel de trop, although Michel can no more be rid of him than Othello could slip from the clutches of Iago. All this is told with a tight, nervy concentration. Anyone thinking of getting married and starting a family should probably stay clear of Moll's movie. As for driving around Europe, forget it. In French.—*A.L.* (5/7/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, East 85th Street, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANGEL EYES
Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.

THE ANIMAL
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Waverly.

BREAD AND ROSES
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, and First & 62nd Cinemas.

CALLE 54
Angelika Film Center.

EUREKA
State.

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (2/5/01)
Village East Cinemas.

THE MAN WHO CRIED
Angelika Film Center and 72nd Street East.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA 2
Cinema Village.

THE ROAD HOME
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN?
84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.

John Travolta as a spy in "Swordfish," opening June 8.

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Gary Cooper: A Centennial Celebration." June 9 at 2: "A Farewell to Arms" (1932, Frank Borzage). ♦ June 9 at 4: "Design for Living" (1933, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ June 10 at 2: "The Adventures of Marco Polo" (1938, Archie Mayo). ♦ June 10 at 4: "The Wedding Night" (1935, King Vidor). ♦ Repertory night. June 9 at 6:30: "Weekend" (1967, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—June 6 at 7:15 and 9:30 and June 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Farewell, Home Sweet Home" (1999, Otar Iosseliani; in French). ♦ June 8 at 2, 4:15, 6:30, and 9:30: "Aprile" (1998, Nanni Moretti; in Italian). ♦ June 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:30, and 9:30: "Ratcatcher" (1999, Lynne Ramsay). ♦ June 10-11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "George Washington" (2000, David Gordon Green). ♦ June 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Ecce Bombo" (1978, Moretti; in Italian).

CINEMA CLASSICS
332 E. 11th St. (971-1015)—June 6-7 at 8 and 10: "The Man Who Came to Dinner" (1942, William Keighley). ♦ June 8-10 at 6, 8, and 10: "The Law of Desire" (1987, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ June 11-12 at 8 and 10: "High Heels" (1991, Almodóvar; in Spanish).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—"Ladies They Talk About: The Women of Pre-Code." June 6 at 1:20, 4:10, 7:10, and 10:15: "Torch Singer" (1933, Alexander Hall). ♦ June 6 at 2:45, 5:45, and 8:50: "Three-Cornered Moon" (1933, Elliott Nugent). ♦ June 7 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "The Story of Temple Drake" (1933, Stephen Roberts). ♦ June 7 at 2:25, 5:25, and 8:25: "Girls About Town" (1931, George Cukor). ♦ June 8 at 3:10, 6:30, and 10: "Design for Living" (1933, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ June 8 at 1:30, 4:50, and 8:15: "Private Lives" (1931, Sidney Franklin). ♦ June 9 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "She Done Him Wrong" (†). ♦ June 9 at 2:20, 5:20, and 8:20: "I'm No Angel" (1933, Wesley Ruggles). ♦ June 10 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30: "Three on a Match" (1932, Mervin LeRoy). ♦ June 10 at 2:15, 6, and 9:45: "Havana Widows" (1933, Ray Enright). ♦ June 10 at 3:30 and 7:15: "Safe in Hell" (1931, William Wellman). ♦ June 11 at 7 and 10:10: "Painted Woman" (1932, John Blystone). ♦ June 11 at 8:25: "Rain" (1932, Lewis Milestone).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (360-4321)—"Conversations Between Shadows and Light: Italian Cinematography." June 8 at 7 and June 9 at 3: "Titus" (1999, Julie Taymor). ♦ June 9 at 7: "The Passenger" (1975, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian).

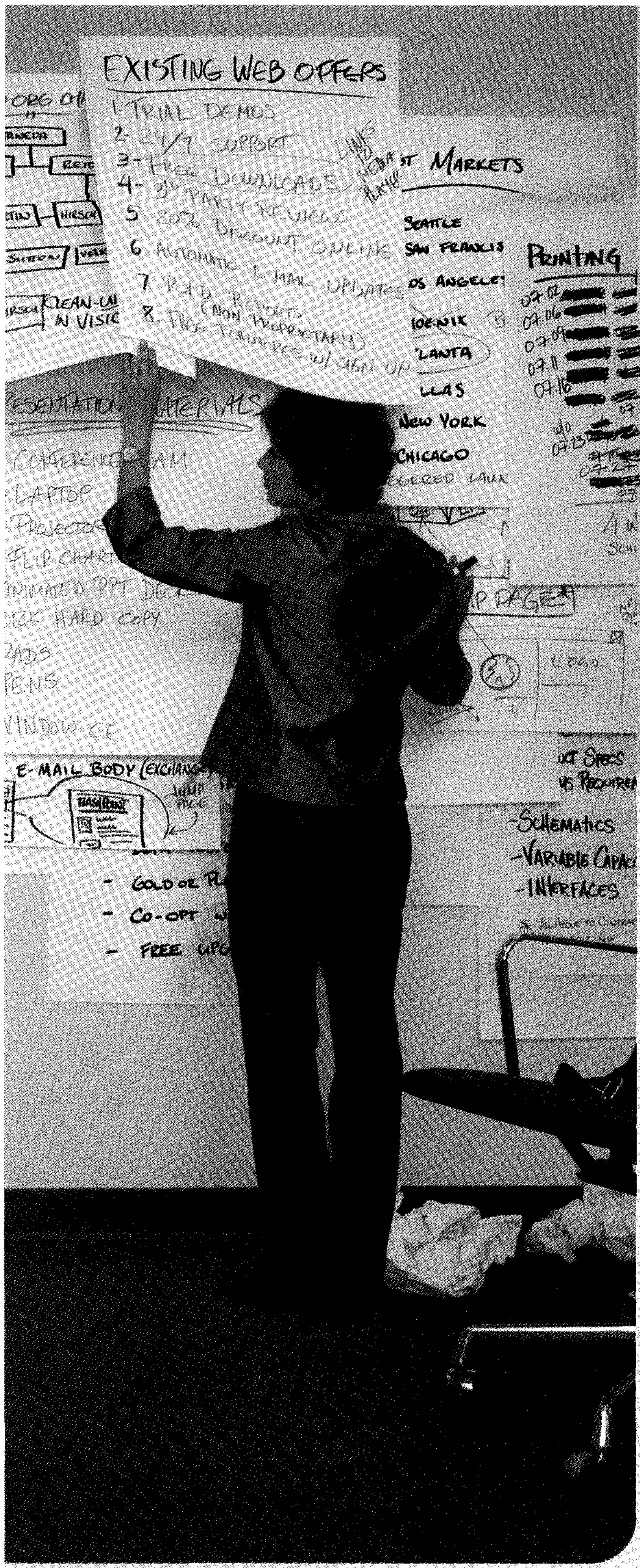
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through June 19: "First Run Features: A Retrospective, 1979-2001." June 7 at 3:30: "The Watermelon Woman" (1997, Cheryl Dunye). ♦ June 8 at 3:30 and June 9 at 5: "No Fear, No Die" (1990, Claire Denis; in French). ♦ June 8 at 6:30 and June 10 at 1:30: "We Were So Beloved" (1986, Manfred Kirchheimer). ♦ June 9 at 2: "Forgotten Silver" (1997, Peter Jackson and Costa Botes) and "Cane Toads: An Unnatural History" (1988, Mark Lewis). ♦ June 10 at 5: "Harlan County U.S.A." (1977, Barbara Kopple). ♦ June 11 at 3:30: "Bedrooms and Hallways" (1998, Rose Troche). ♦ June 11 at 6: "Like It Is" (1998, Paul Oremland).

THE MUSEUM OF TELEVISION & RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Restored silent films. June 8 at 6 and June 9-10 at 2: "The Crowd" (1928, King Vidor).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Through June 14: An Audrey Hepburn retrospective. June 6-7 at 3:30 and 7:55 and June 10 at 1:30 and 6:40: "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961, Blake Edwards). ♦ June 6-7 at 5:45 and 10:10: "Sabrina" (1954, Billy Wilder). ♦ June 8 at 4 and June 9 at 1:45, 6:10, 8:30, and 10:40: "Charade" (†). ♦ June 8 at 6:10, 8:15, and 10:20: "Wait Until Dark" (1967, Terence Young). ♦ June 10 at 4 and 9:10: "Love in the Afternoon" (1957, Billy Wilder). ♦ June 11-12 at 3:45 and 9:20: "My Fair Lady" (1964, George Cukor). ♦ June 11-12 at 7: "How to Steal a Million" (1966, William Wyler).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through June 14: "Open Roads: New Italian Cinema." ♦ June 12 at 5:30: "Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures" (2001, Jan Harlan).

JOHN RITTER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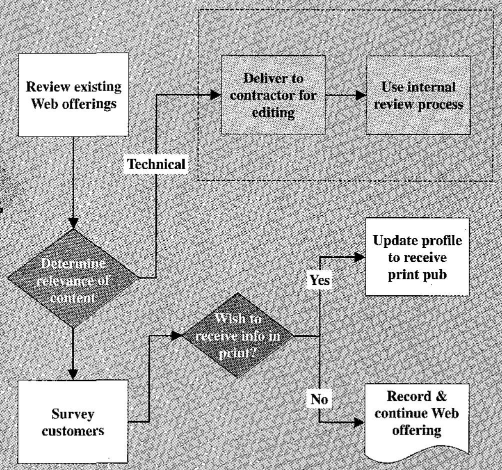
See what I'm saying?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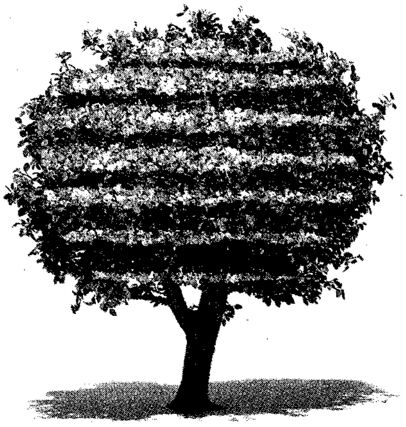

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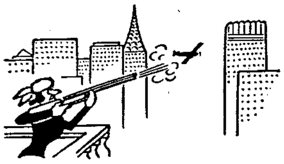
THE
NEW YORKER

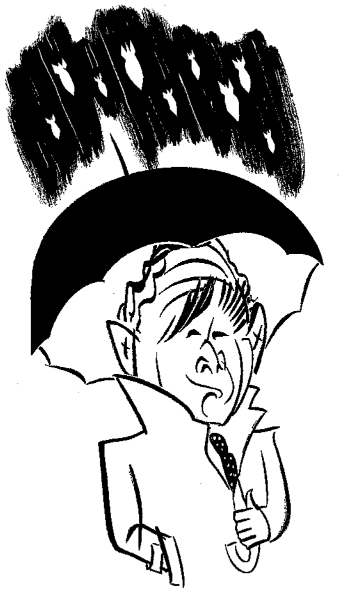
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DEFENSE MECHANISMS



The great White House crusade for missile defense reached an unprecedented level of strangeness the other day. The Bush Administration came up with a startling addition to the list of contractors who stand to profit from its pet military project. Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon, meet your new colleague: the Russian Rocket Forces. The proposal is for the United States to buy a big consignment of Soviet-designed S-300 air-defense systems and set them up in Europe as part of the American missile shield. We'd pay top dollar, too. The Russian defense minister, Sergei B. Ivanov, said Russia would be glad to get the business. But he did express some puzzlement about why we would want S-300s, since they are designed to work against airplanes, not ballistic missiles, and he added that his government still has no plans to roll over for a unilateral American withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Missile defense is one of those oddball ideas, like flat taxes and school vouchers, that have hardened into conservative dogma. But it has a weirder, more meandering history than most. It started life in 1983 as a Ronald Reagan "dream," fuelled by Edward Teller briefings and movies old ("Murder in the Air," a 1940 thriller in which Reagan stops a spy from stealing an "inertia projector" that can shoot down distant aircraft) and new ("Star Wars"). The Strategic Defense Initiative was to be an impenetrable umbrella that would keep the United States warm and dry against the ultimate hard rain, a surprise attack by the Soviet arsenal of ten thousand long-range warheads. Apart from President Reagan himself, the only people who took the dream seriously had offices in the Kremlin, where the view was, essentially, "If the Americans can invent the remote control and the working hotel elevator, they can do anything." The market value of the Reagan dream, like that of a dot-com I.P.O., required no proof of viability. Its price peaked at the 1986 summit in Reykjavik, where it drove a deal that would have stopped the Cold War cold, with an agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States to scrap their entire nuclear arsenals. Mikhail Gorbachev's only condition was that Star Wars had to go, too; Reagan's was that it had to stay. Both men were overvaluing something that did not and could not exist; because neither would budge, the deal fell through.



George W. Bush

The Cold War ended anyway, but missile defense survived. It took its place in conservative hagiography as the symbol of how Reagan's toughness brought down the Soviet empire. (S.D.I. thus became a shield not against missiles but against the awkward fact that Reagan had been ready to give away what conservatives regarded as the store.) In scaled-down form, missile defense spent the nineteen-nineties in development hell; the Clinton Administration, afraid to buck the military-industrial lobby that had formed behind the program, let it limp along and pushed decisions about deployment into the future. With the advent of Bush II and his Bush I-vintage national-security apparatus, the push was on for S.D.I.—renamed National Missile Defense, or N.M.D.—to be, in Pentagon jargon, "ramped up."

Colin Powell was in Budapest last week, trying to persuade the other NATO foreign ministers that N.M.D. is needed to defend the United States and its allies and friends against any "state of concern" (the new name for rogue states like North

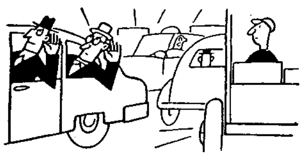
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Korea) or terrorist group that might have a weapon of mass destruction and the crazy determination to use it. It was a tough sell, not only because the threat is so hypothetical but also because an intercontinental ballistic missile is such a conspicuous, expensive, and unreliable way to transport a weapon the size of a steamer trunk—kind of like using a mobile home to deliver a pizza. Why not just rent a motorboat or a panel truck instead? Shooting down missiles, though, isn't really what N.M.D. is about. What it's about—besides jobs for the boys (sixty billion dollars, the minimum price for a minimal system, gets a lot of people on the payroll)—is what the Chinese call American global hegemony. (American freedom of action is a nicer way to put it.) The very existence of something designated as N.M.D., the logic goes, might make it harder for rocket-wielding but otherwise weak rogue states to bluff the United States and its allies out of undertaking needed military interventions. Whether the system would work or not is beside the point.

There's some merit to this logic, just as there's some merit to the opposing logic that N.M.D. might end up fostering rancor within the alliance, alienating (and financing) the Russians, siphoning funds from other military programs, and prompting the Chinese to build lots more nukes. What there's no merit to is the rush to deploy. If the ideological barnacles on all sides could somehow be scraped off, perhaps the matter could be decided on the basis of cost-effectiveness, economic and diplomatic. Thanks to Europe's resistance and the changeover in the United States Senate, the ramp to N.M.D. just got steeper. This is all to the good. Is missile defense worth the trouble and expense? Could it be made to work well enough to be even remotely credible? Would it make the world a safer place or a more dangerous one? These are complicated questions, and there is only one good way to answer them: very, very slowly.

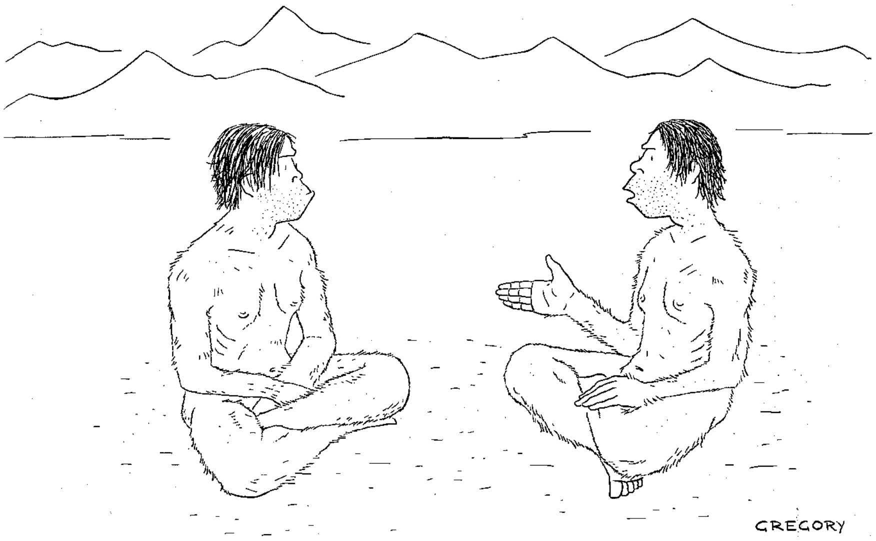
—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DEPT. OF ONCE AND FOR ALL
THE VAN WYCK QUESTION



This much we know about the Van Wyck Expressway: it runs north-south through Queens, is 9.3 miles long, and connects the Whitestone Expressway to John F. Kennedy International Airport. It can be the first thing visitors see of New York, upon arriving by air, or the last, before leaving. And they tend to see it very slowly, since it is almost always jammed with traffic. It is a dismal stretch of road, right up there with the Cross-Bronx on any respectable list of the worst highways in the tri-state area.

But how do you pronounce it? Is it Van *Wick* or Van *Wike*? In a city rich with phonetic conundrums, this is the most vexing one of all, more so even than those two bridges the Kosciusko (Koss-kee-os-ko or Kah-shoo-sko) and the Goethals (Gah-thals or Go-thals).



"Personally, I think the world would be a safer place if everybody owned a rock."

"Solving it is not easy," Sal Cowan said the other day. Cowan is the operations manager for Shadow Traffic and Metro Traffic, which provide traffic reports to most of the city's TV and radio stations. "Years ago, our reporters were calling it the Van Wick Expressway. But the Van Wyck family started writing letters requesting that we change our pronunciation from Van Wick to Van Wike. And we like to appease the Van Wyck family." According to Cowan, some radio stations—1010 WINS (traffic on the ones; i.e., 5:11, 5:21, 5:31, and so on) and WCBS 880 (traffic on the eights)—decided to heed the family's wishes. Others—Bloomberg 1130 (traffic on the fives)—decided to stick with Wick. So, Cowan says, it's been Wike on the ones and the eights, and Wick on the fives.

Mark Mason, the executive editor at 1010 WINS, says, "It's kind of a free-for-all. I get the argument from the Wike faction that it's Dutch, that it's like 'Dick Van Dyke,' but that has an 'e' on the end, which would actually make Dyke an argument for Wick. But I don't know Dutch." (The proper Dutch pronunciation of Van Wyck, according to Cordula Bartha, a cultural officer at the Netherlands Consulate, is "Fan Veig," like "egg," with a touch of "ache"—in other words, neither Wick nor Wike but something in between.)

The expressway was built, between 1947 and 1963, by Robert Moses, who predicted, "Traffic will flow freely." Moses, apparently, called it the Van Wick; legend has it that when someone once tried to correct him he barked, "I'm Robert Moses. I can call it whatever I damn please!"

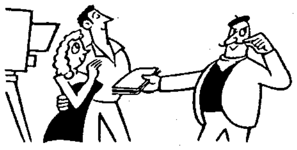
The Van Wyck was named after Robert Van Wyck, who was the first mayor of Greater New York following the consolidation of the five boroughs, in 1898. His name was pronounced Wike. That's also the correct pronunciation of the Van Wyck Homestead Museum, in Fishkill, New York, where a number of Van Wycks settled centuries ago. What about Van Wyck Brooks, the author? He went with Wick, but he doesn't matter, because the expressway is not named after him.

Patricia Farrar, the eighty-six-year-old widow of Edwin Hawley Van Wyck, Jr., who was Mayor Van Wyck's grand-nephew, doesn't know what all the confusion is about. "It's Van Wike," she said. In her family, Farrar is known to be something of an authority on the matter—though she now lives in the Shadow-traffic-less town of Tuckerman, Arkansas. Over the phone, she read from an April, 1960, article in the now defunct Long Island *Press*, headlined "WIKE, LIKE LIKE: VAN WYCK PRONUNCIATION OFFICIAL." "Pronounce it Van WIKE, as in LIKE, not Van WICK, as in SICK," Farrar read. "Who says? Why, Mr. Van Wyck, of course." According to the *Press*, John G. Clancy, who was the Queens borough president at the time, had issued an official pronunciation proclamation after receiving a letter from one James T. Van Wyck, of Kenmore, New York.

The memory of that proclamation seems to have faded in the Queens borough president's office. "I think it's 'Wick,'" Dan Andrews, a spokesman for the borough president, Claire Shulman, said. He put in a call to the Queens Borough Historian, Stanley Cogan, who knew little about the matter, except that many residents of Queens pronounce it Van Wick. "Wick is more popular, but I'll stick to Wike," he said. "I get a lot of calls on this," Andrews added, wearily. "I also get a lot of calls wondering where Archie Bunker's house is. There's a difference of opinion on that one, too."

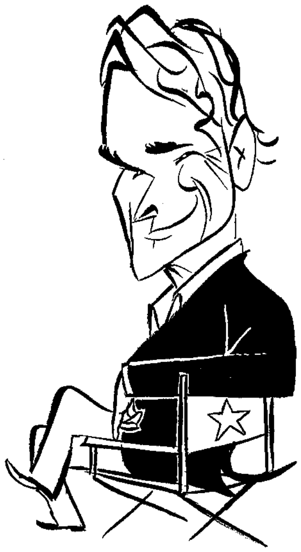
—*Nick Paumgarten*

THE PICTURES
MARK STRAND, TAKE TWO



"It was clear when I left the party / That though I was over eighty I still had / A beautiful body" is a line of poetry that is either proleptic or merely wishful, because its author, Mark Strand, is just sixty-seven years old. He has recently taken steps, though, to preserve his good looks for all time—he has embarked on a career in film. Strand, the former poet laureate, made his acting début in a movie called "Chelsea Walls," which was directed by Ethan Hawke and was screened at Cannes a few weeks ago. Strand plays a journalist interviewing a woman named Mary (Natasha Richardson) about her boyfriend (Kris Kristofferson), a disreputable author who lives in the Chelsea Hotel. With chiselled features and a rich, hushed voice, Strand calls to mind a more professorial Clint Eastwood. "Mark is stunning, beautiful," Nicole Burdette, the film's screenwriter, said recently. "We'll never even think of doing one of our movies without Mark in it now."

The other night, Strand spoke about his new career over the phone from his home, in Chicago. "When I was young, I always thought I could be a sergeant in the cavalry of any Western movie," he said. "Finally, my dream came true. I wasn't a sergeant—I was an aging journalist, which seemed good enough, for an aging human being. I was supposed to be there early to be made up, after Natasha. They took about an hour and a half with her, and about ten seconds with me. She had to look good. I look like my old, silly, craggy self.



Mark Strand

"I wish I could say I'm going to drop everything and run to Hollywood and be an actor. I love L.A. But I guess I'm a fuddy-duddy or a kind of East Coaster. L.A. is a town for people under thirty. I don't belong. I can't dress myself up as a twenty-five-year-old. It would be a hideous thing, me dressed up as a Hollywood agent, walking down the street.

"Still, I would jump at the chance to be in a movie again. But only if I had more to say—more lines—so I could act a little. I think I'd make a good President or ambassador. If they dressed me right. I'd like to do such roles. The Dignified Older Gentleman. I'm so much the opposite, I feel. A little clumsy, a little dishevelled. I wear good jackets, but that's about the extent of it."

—*Dana Goodyear*

LINGO DEPT.
"IT'S ALL GOOD"

Advertising executives at the National Basketball Association recently decided to retire the sport's ten-year-old slogan, "I love this game," and replace it with a new one: "It's all good." According to Scott Weinstock, a vice-president and senior creative director at the N.B.A., the change signals the ascendancy of a new generation of players, who are every bit as exciting to watch as their predecessors were. "You had the days of Mike and Larry, and now you have the days of Vince Carter and Allen Iverson," Weinstock said. "The game is as good as it has ever been, and it is only getting better."

This is, of course, arguable, but the adoption of "It's all good" does confirm that phrase's omnipresence in the contemporary lexicon. The expression got a big push into the mainstream this spring on "Survivor: The Australian Outback," when it was used by Alicia Calaway, the buff personal trainer, who informed twenty-eight and a half million Americans that, even though she had not won a million dollars, her experience had indeed been all good. And when Puffy Combs was asked by "Entertainment Tonight" about his painful breakup with Jennifer Lopez earlier this year, he resorted to the "It's all good" formula to explain how he would always have a place in his heart for J. Lo.

According to Weinstock, the meaning of "It's all good" is straightforward. "It means 'no worries,'" he said. "If Disney were to use it, they would say 'Hakuna Matata.'" Actually, "It's all good" is often more nuanced. The original popularizers of the expression were rap performers, including Hammer, who in 1994 released a song entitled "It's All Good." A year later, Tupac Shakur employed the phrase in his hit "California Love," on which Dr. Dre announced, "Diamonds shinin' lookin' like I robbed Liberace / It's all good from Diego to tha Bay." In such contexts, "It's all good" serves as a statement of defiance rather than complacency; things are clearly not all good, for example, if you happen to be Liberace.

The phrase continues to be reflexively used in the rap world, and it has now been adopted ironically by upper-middle-class white people, in whose parlance "It's all good" is usually a way of preëmptively closing a conversation—a discussion of the final episode of "The Sopranos," for example—and segueing to the next topic: where to find the best sushi in the East Village. But the most widespread use of "It's all good" seems to be among people who have recently discovered yoga and meditation. For this demographic, "It's all good" has become a kind of New Age, neo-Buddhist mantra, one with a peculiarly American flavor of optimism. (As Mark Epstein, the author of "Going On Being: Buddhism and the Way of Change," points out, a truly Buddhist view would be "It's all suffering.") It means that every reversal—breaking up with your boyfriend, getting downsized from your dot-com—is also an opportunity for personal growth. Admittedly, this usage has greater appeal if you are a laid-off, newly single dot-commer than it might if you were, say, an Afghani refugee or a resident of southern Sudan.

Stephen Cope, the author of "Yoga and the Quest for the True Self," explained by telephone last week that he often hears the phrase in the halls of the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Lenox, Massachusetts, where he is the senior scholar-in-residence. Cope said that although he believes Americans often need a corrective to an embedded Puritan world view—which might be characterized as "It's all bad, especially you"—the phrase does, nonetheless, raise his hackles. "There is a way in which that mantra can lead to a fatalistic view of life, and can leave out the incredible power of choice," he said. The first time Cope heard the expression was shortly after he arrived at Kripalu, twelve years ago. "My car had broken down in the middle of a nor'easter, and I ended up having to walk home through the storm and got pneumonia," he said. "I remember someone proposed to me the notion that this was all good, and I definitely had a reaction to it: it is *not* good being sick, and it would have been good if I had had a cell phone. The only thing that is definitely all good all the time is anything that comes in a blue box from Tiffany."

—*Rebecca Mead*

INDEPENDENCE DAY: THE JEFFORDS EFFECT

Surprise and puzzlement characterized the Yankees' response late last week when Derek Jeter unexpectedly bought out the remainder of his new, hundred-and-eighty-nine-million-dollar contract with the Bronx Bombers and moved across town to play for the Mets. Jeter, who went home to Kalamazoo, Michigan, to make the announcement, stated that he would be playing as an independent shortstop from now on, but admitted that his at-bats and play afield at Shea Stadium might have "some slight effect" on the Mets' fortunes for the remainder of their season—and just possibly on the World Series in the fall, if the two teams should meet there in October, as they did last year.

Asked what repercussions his absence might have upon the Yankees' chances to grab a fourth consecutive World Championship, Jeter shrugged and said, "That's not what this is about."

Don Zimmer, the quotable roly-poly Yankee bench coach, said, "I'm amazed. I'm always kiddin' around with Derek, and he never said boo to me about something like this."

Joe Torre, the Yankee manager, said, "Derek has always gone his own way, and I respect that. We thought it was our way, too, but heartbreak is a constant in this game. It would be wrong to assume there was anything behind this except—well, except Derek's need for self-expression, which I don't not take seriously."

Paul O'Neill, the former Yankee right fielder, who ten days previously had announced his surprise retirement from baseball in order to become an independent film producer, said, "I barely ever spoke to Derek—or to anybody else—except when he told me to fucking cheer up out there. I told him to stick that up his ass, but then I began to think about what he'd said. And so—" O'Neill raised his hands and eyebrows expressively.

Yankee owner George Steinbrenner withheld comment on the Jeter move, but officials close to the Boss said that the normally free-spoken executive was hurt by the defection and wondering privately how his well-paid, highly sensitive staff could have missed little signals from the 2000 World Series Most Valuable Player that would have indicated a mounting private sense of malaise or lack of appreciation. "Geez, what'd I ever *say*?" is the quoted Steinbrenner refrain.

In a statement issued later in the day, the Yankees announced that Jeter's dramatic shift to the other New York team would have minor consequences for the most storied franchise in sports. "The Yankees' commitment to victory and to full participation in that process by every member of the Yankee family is unchanged by the actions of any single player, however talented or wantonly individualistic," the release went on.

Word on the legality of the Jeter move had yet to come from Major League Baseball, which was in the process of reorganization following Commissioner Bud Selig's decision to accept an offer to replace the departed David Stern as commissioner of the National Basketball Association. Mr. Stern, just settling in as the new president of Maryknoll College—a post he opted for after a rumored dissing by Lakers star Shaquille O'Neal—reserved comment on the Jeter shocker. "But I know where Derek's heart is," he added, with a wounded smile.

Philadelphia Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani said, "Pride and personal choices are something you learn about sooner or later in this life, whether in Washington or Gracie Mansion or up in the Bronx. The Yanks are the greatest, but sometimes the right way is the highway."

Further developments in the Jeter decision are expected this weekend, when Jeter and Vermont Senator James Jeffords will be interviewed by Judge Judy, Philippe de Montebello, and other regular panelists on PBS's "Meet the Press."

—*Roger Angell*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

THE NEW INNOVATORS

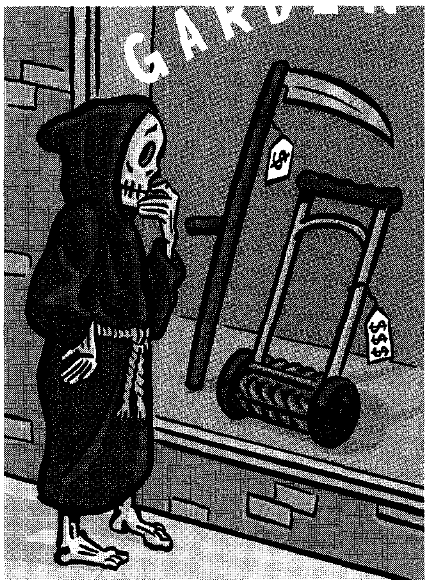
"Build a worse mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door." This isn't much of a slogan, but over the past four years it has, in certain circles, become conventional wisdom, thanks mainly to "The Innovator's Dilemma," a 1997 book by a Harvard professor named Clayton Christensen. Why, Christensen asked, do companies that dominate one kind of technology tend to get swamped by those that offer something new? American auto companies ruled the world of big, powerful cars but were blindsided by the Japanese when small cars came into vogue. The same thing happened to companies that made big radios when the transistor radio came along, and to minicomputer manufacturers with the arrival of the P.C.

Christensen discovered that the new technologies—he called them "disruptive technologies"—were actually less effective, at first, than those they replaced. Japan's cars were less powerful and more dangerous than Detroit's. Transistor radios were tinny. P.C.s were weak. But the new products were both inexpensive and convenient. This allowed them to win over the low end of the market, the people who couldn't afford—or didn't want—an El Dorado or an Emerson. Eventually, as the disruptors got better, they won over the rest of the market.

That, at least, was the message that thousands of giddy entrepreneurs—and beleaguered big-company C.E.O.s—took away from the book. In a sense, the Internet boom was an illustration of Christensen's principles. If you bought and sold stocks online, you got no advice from a broker. If you shopped for a bathing suit online, you couldn't try it on. But, hey, it was cheap and easy. People believed that in the long run cheap and easy would win.

There are always heretics, however. For the last four years, a number of them have been working at a Santa Clara company called Foveon. Foveon makes a camera that is unlike any other built before: the Foveon II, which is a digital camera connected to a Windows laptop. It records images with three chips and twelve "mega-sensors"—no film. The photograph being taken is displayed on the laptop's screen, so the photographer knows exactly what the picture will look like. He can tinker with the lighting or zoom in on different parts of the image, to make sure that every detail is crisp and clear. What you see is, in fact, what you get. And you get it quickly—in three minutes, you have a print of astonishing density and detail, about as good as anything out there. The only hitch is the price: the Foveon II will cost you twenty thousand dollars. So much for cheap and easy.

Then again, Foveon's founder, a man named Carver Mead, thinks that "cheap and easy" is overrated. Mead is what you might call an innovator's innovator. Rail-thin, with a graying goatee and a closetful of Hawaiian shirts, he's a blend of Thomas Edison, Yoda, and Maynard G. Krebs, and is given to gnomic pronouncements such as "You have to listen to the technology." He owns a host of patents, in fields ranging from solid-state physics to hearing aids. And he essentially invented the process that made it possible for people to make ever more complicated computer chips at a reasonable price, which means that he's responsible for that computer on your desk. The technology evangelist George Gilder once wrote of him, with characteristic hyperbole, "No single individual has exerted a more profound influence on modern human productivity."



In Mead's view, there are two kinds of disruptive innovations. Type Two innovations are the ones Christensen wrote about. They don't perform as well as the technologies they replace, but they have other virtues (price and convenience). Type One innovations, on the other hand, are of much higher quality than the technologies they replace. The refrigerator was better than the icebox. The vacuum cleaner was more powerful than the broom and dustpan. The active-matrix laptop screen had a much better image than the passive-matrix screen. In all these cases, quality won.

For a while, at least, Type Ones tend to be prohibitively expensive. "If you're trying to build something that's truly new, you can't start off by trying to reach a mass market," Mead says. For that reason, Foveon is targeting only professional studio photographers. "You have to start with the people who want to do things they couldn't do before and who are willing to pay for that." Mead, of course, thinks that Foveon is one of those truly new things. And, technologically speaking, it may be. Film is dumb. It can't tell the photographer how much light it's receiving, or whether he's got the image he wants. Recording an image has always involved guesswork. The Foveon II does away with that.

History is littered with failed Type Ones. It's impossible to say whether Foveon will be another PicturePhone (ever own one?) or the next DVD. What's significant, though, is its rejection of the Christensen model that characterized the Internet economy, where companies tried to topple incumbents by being faster and cheaper. That was nice for consumers but not for companies; when everyone's getting cheaper and faster, no one's making any money. Now companies and venture capitalists are searching for innovations that represent a qualitative advance. They're heeding the economist Joseph Schumpeter: "Innovations are changes . . . which cannot be decomposed into infinitesimal steps. Add as many mail-coaches as you please, you will never get a railroad."

—*James Surowiecki*

Extraordinary
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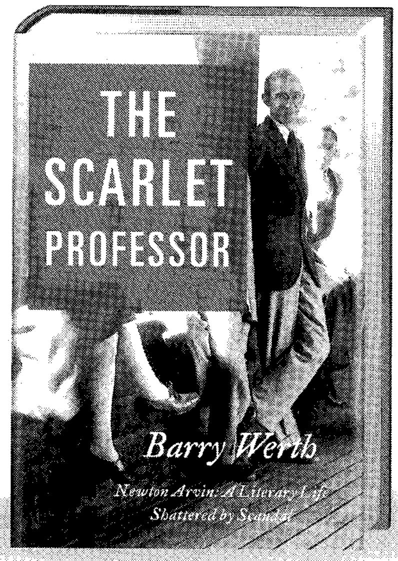
"A hell of a story....
Werth puzzles out
Arvin with intelligent
empathy."
—David Gates, *Newsweek*



"Werth eschews any temptation to turn Arvin's story into propaganda...and tells it as a human story, about a man who was denied happiness by his sexual nature, his private character, and the society in which he lived."
—Jonathan Yardley,
The Washington Post

"Barry Werth has brought to vivid life a crucial episode in the history of American repression.... He has a marvelous narrative gift and tells his tale with spellbinding skill."
—Martin Duberman,
author of *Paul Robeson: A Biography*

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LETTER FROM KANSAS CITY

THE BULL VANISHES

Does being a cowtown require the presence of cows?

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

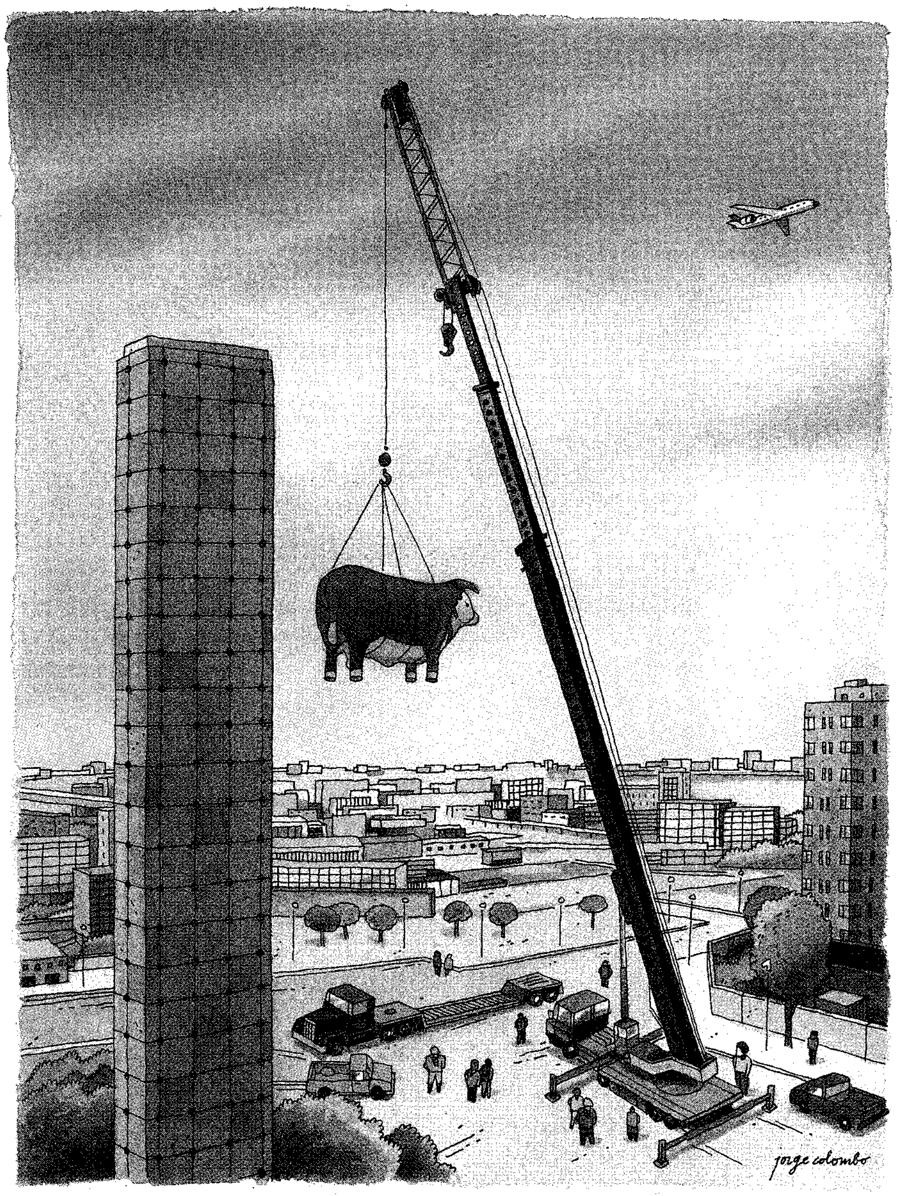
We needn't go into great detail as to how I came to consider myself the protector of the bull on top of the American Hereford Association Building, in Kansas City, Missouri. You could just say that the bull and I go way back. Around the time the bull arrived, in 1954—it came trundling right through downtown on a low-bed truck, and then a crane plopped it on top of a ninety-foot pylon, instantly transforming it into a singular element of the downtown skyline—I was actually winding up my days as a bona-fide year-round Kansas City resident, but I've often made brief references to the bull when I've written about my home town. At least once, I'll admit, I mentioned that its heart and liver lit up at night, a canard whose invention I can defend only by pointing out that in the Midwest an oversized farm animal traditionally inspires what you might call an excess of specificity: one of the city's leading businessmen insists to this day that the lights inside the bull—necessary for safety as well as for dramatic effect, since it was placed practically in the approach to the old municipal airport—were installed entirely within its scrotum.

In time, the presence of a huge plastic brown-and-white bull in the sky became a comfort for the people in town who were resisting the notion that there was anything embarrassing about Kansas City's connection with farm animals and grains, a connection that was often summed up in one word: cowtown. For a few years in the seventies, those people, many of whom had family or business connections to agriculture, seemed outgunned by the civic boosters who believed that my home town should actively reject its association with agriculture in order to be considered a sophisticated and even glamorous city—a city whose iconic statuary should be more on the order of the rococo fountains in the graceful old shopping district we like to think of as the world-famous Country Club Plaza. Even though my own connection with farming or ranching didn't extend beyond accompanying my father on ritual visits to the annual American Royal Livestock and Horse Show, I had begun to think of myself as a member of the pro-cowtown forces who happened to be based in New York, like a French Army officer arguing the Free French position in London during the Second World War.

So it was natural for an old high-school friend to alert me when he read in the Kansas City *Star* this winter that there was a plan afoot to take the bull down and move it to a nearby park. By the time I called for details, the bull was gone, tucked away in a warehouse somewhere while a new pedestal was being prepared. The actual removal of the bull, after forty-seven years on the skyline, had not even made the *Star*. I had enough questions to justify a trip home. Was that new pedestal going to be a tall pedestal or the sort of pedestal that is convenient for hiding large statues behind the shrubbery? Where had the cowtown forces been when their symbol was being lowered? Why hadn't any of them climbed up through the pylon—I happened to know that there are ladders in there for maintenance access—and chained themselves to the bull in defiance of those who would snatch him out of the sky? Was it possible that nobody cared about the bull anymore except me?

I had just left for college when the American Hereford Association Building was dedicated by the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Ike began his speech by saying how pleased he was to be back where he felt at home. He was the second straight President who could make such a statement in Kansas City, having succeeded our very own Harry S. Truman, who had once struggled mightily to make a living as a farmer. It was a grand day for beef.

Senators and Cabinet secretaries were present. The host for the occasion was Harry Darby, an industrialist who had served briefly in the United States Senate and who, like so many other prominent businessmen in the area, was deeply involved both in the American Royal and in Hereford breeding. The Hereford building, constructed at a cost of a million dollars, stood at the western edge of downtown on a bluff overlooking riverbank land known as the West Bottoms, where thousands of head of cattle arrived daily to be sold or slaughtered. America was prosperous, and the juicy steak—including, of course, the Kansas City strip—was one of the symbols of its prosperity; Ike mentioned in his remarks that Americans ate thirty-three million pounds of beef every day. The Hereford industry, he said, was "of transcendent importance to the economy of the United States."



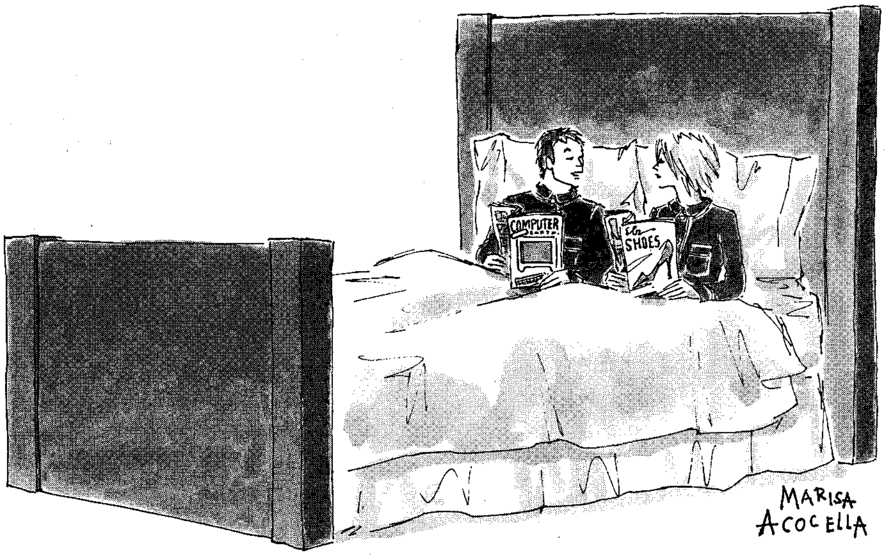
Why hadn't protesters climbed through the pylon and chained themselves to the bull?

JORGE COLOMBO

Among the approaches to historical scholarship that have emerged in recent decades—approaches like the New Social History, whose practitioners make great use of the diaries and letters of ordinary people—there ought to be room for the New Real Estate History, which would tell the story of this country through real-estate transactions. The American Hereford Association, for instance, had needed its new headquarters because by the early fifties it had grown into an organization with seventeen thousand members. It employed a couple of hundred people, most of whom were engaged in keeping track of cattle pedigrees. The American Polled Hereford Association, which had split off at the beginning of the century to create a separate organization for the promotion of hornless Herefords, also moved into its own new building in Kansas City during the fifties. The Angus people occupied a large brick building in St. Joseph, my father's home town, fifty-five miles north. In the fifties, those breeds, plus Shorthorns, pretty much accounted for the pedigreed cattle in the United States.

Then the cattle business changed, and the real estate changed to reflect that. For one thing, the pedigree registration that had been done at the American Hereford Association by a hundred and fifty people working with punched cards went through two or three stages of technological advancement until it could be done by fewer than a dozen people and a computer about the size of a small refrigerator. A wide array of Continental breeds, sometimes called exotics, began to find acceptance in the United States. (Today, the Kansas City area alone has the headquarters for Charolais, Chianina, Maine Anjou, Belgian Blue, and Blonde d'Aquitaine—none of which had been on view when my father and I carried out our annual farm-animal inspection.) Meanwhile, largely because of changing notions of what constituted a healthy diet, beef consumption in the United States was shrinking. The number of breeders who registered their cattle with the American Hereford Association was also decreased by a change in tax law which made the Herefords grazing on oil-and-gas land seem more like cattle and less like four-legged units of depreciation. The American Hereford Association increasingly found itself with a smaller piece of a smaller pie.

In 1985, three decades after President Eisenhower stood in front of a huge portrait of a Hereford to extoll the glory of beef, the American Hereford Association, which by then had only fifty employees, sold its building to the real-estate arm of DST Systems, a Kansas City company that does back-office work for the mutual-fund industry, and moved to a more compact headquarters. A few years later, the American Polled Hereford Association, having experienced similar shrinkage, moved from its building to a suite of offices near the airport. Several



"Hey, wanna get kinky and read each other's catalogues?"

• •

years ago, after more than ninety years of occasionally contentious rivalry, the Polled Hereford folks returned to the fold of the American Hereford Association at the new A.H.A. headquarters—a turn of events that was more or less the equivalent of the Southern Baptists deciding, after a century and a half on their own, that they would just as soon be American Baptists after all.

Phil Kirk, the chairman of DST's real-estate operation, assured me that he is a friend of the bull. I believed him, partly because the people at the American Hereford Association, which had retained ownership of the bull, were untroubled by the fact that he seemed to be the only person in Kansas City who actually knew where it was. DST does have a reputation as a good corporate citizen. For years, the city has been concerned about downtown being, well, quiet, and DST, which now employs five thousand people in Kansas City alone, not only has resisted the fashion of moving its workforce to a campus in the suburbs but has done impressive restorations of many buildings on the west side of downtown; a historian will someday be able to tell the story of DST's growth and its corporate culture through its real-estate transactions.

Kirk said that when DST's tenant in the old Hereford building was one of its own subsidiaries, a company that does back-office work for pharmacies, everyone was happy to leave the bull just where it was; a back-office operation, after all, has no need to flaunt its corporate identity. But when the building was leased as a corporate headquarters—the new tenant is HNTB, an engineering and architectural firm that specializes in large public projects—other arrangements for the bull had to be made. The city had agreed to accept ownership of the bull and place it on a pylon, provided by DST, in a small park across from the new F.B.I. regional headquarters, within sight of the old building. Kirk had color pictures of what the bull would look like in its new location; they showed the pylon to be a tall pylon.

I asked to see the bull itself. I felt it was my place. Also, I wanted to check for bullet holes. "The bull has taken some hits," I'd been told by Craig Huffhines, the executive vice-president of the American Hereford Association. I don't think the shots were fired in anger. There is absolutely no reason to believe that in the seventies rogue elements of the anti-cowtown boosters, frustrated by the failure of a public-relations campaign that produced articles like "COWTOWN NO MORE," had taken matters into their own hands. Thinking back on my high-school days, I'm comfortable with the assumption that some people in my home town would just naturally respond to the sight of a large, brightly lit animal in the sky by shooting at it with a .22.

Huffhines agreed to take me to the bull, and got directions from Kirk's office to one of the vast old limestone mines around Kansas City which are now outfitted with amenities like overhead lighting and concrete floors so they can be used for warehouse space and distribution centers and, in one case not long ago, a 10K charity run. We drove out there, accompanied by Bud Snidow, a retired association official who, as a Hereford field man for the eastern United States in the early fifties, had escorted some bull artists to a farm on the Eastern Shore of Maryland to take photos and measurements of the animal they intended to use as a model—a champion Hereford by the name of Hillcrest Larry IV. Inside the mine, we drove to an obscure corner where a tarp hung between two huge pillars. I was relieved to see that security precautions had been taken.

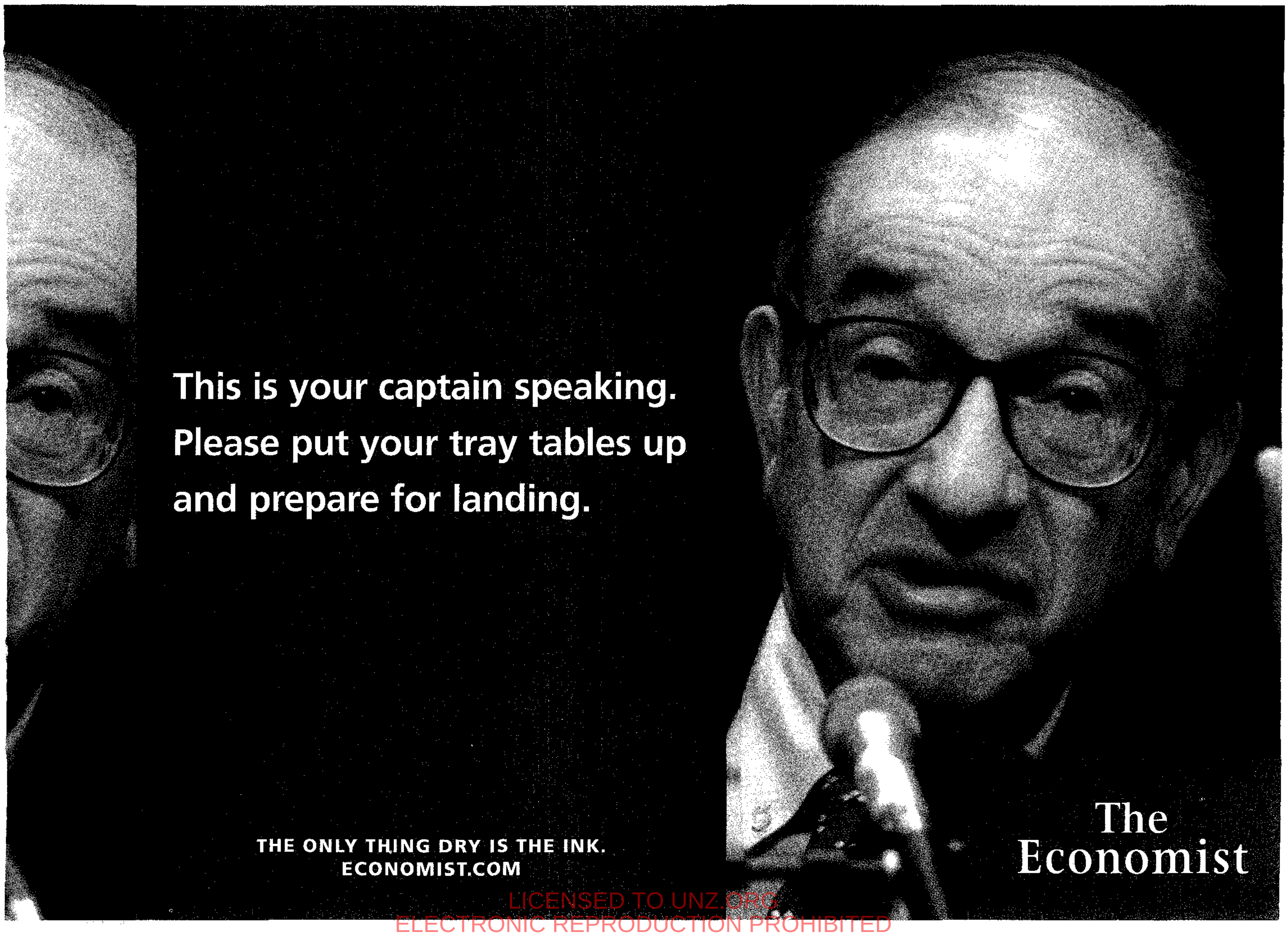
Behind the tarp, in a small, unfinished alcove, there wasn't much light. But I could see the bull. He's about twelve feet high and twenty feet long, and in the confined space he seemed huge. He didn't appear to have any unrepaired bullet holes in him. Although Hillcrest Larry IV was considered such a flawless Hereford specimen that he changed hands in 1950 for a record seventy thousand and five hundred dollars, there are no longer any champion Hereford bulls that look like him. In the era of Hillcrest Larry IV, marbled beef was the goal; the genre that Herefords belonged to was commonly called "fat cattle," and a champion steer resembled a low-slung barrel on legs. Partly because of the preference for leaner meat and partly because weight is added more efficiently on a larger frame, Hereford breeders began in the sixties to breed for a much larger, higher, leaner, leggier animal. You wouldn't need any carbon testing to establish when the bull I was looking at had been made; it carries its provenance in its shape. It looks like the Herefords my father and I used to inspect every year at the American Royal—a fact, I realized as I stood under its head and gazed at its mighty chest, that might have something to do with my affection for it.

Stacked up behind the bull, like an unassembled Christmas toy for a giant child, were the parts of another bull. Apparently thinking of how close the bull would be to the airport flight path and to winds powerful enough to have carried a little farm girl off to the Land of Oz, the Hereford people had been prudent enough to ask for a spare. If the occasional potshot with a .22 escalates into heavy-weapons fire—an eventuality that is considered highly unlikely in the new venue, given its proximity to the F.B.I. building—all is not lost. We've got a backup bull.

While I was in Kansas City, somebody gave me a 1944 telephone book, because it listed, on facing pages, the name of my father and of Harry Truman. The Yellow Pages carried about twenty entries under "Packing Houses." On a single record day the previous year, Kansas City's cattle pens and slaughterhouses "involved," as the *Star* discreetly put it, sixty-four thousand head of cattle. In those days of my childhood, Kansas City schoolchildren regularly went to the stockyards on field trips, an experience that turned at least one contemporary of mine into what I suppose you'd call a premature vegetarian.

A few years later, the commercial beef industry was beginning to see the advantage of slaughtering cattle near the feedlots where they'd spent their final year on earth. By the time Ike dedicated the Hereford building, some of Kansas City's slaughterhouses had already closed, and eventually even weekly cattle sales ended. As I counted bovines on my recent trip to Kansas City, the statues—the Hereford bull, a smaller Charolais on the side of the Charolais Association Building, a bigger-than-life-size rodeo bull about to buck a rider just south of the Plaza, a smallish fighting bull in front of a barbecue restaurant near Union Station, a dancing cartoon cow next to Maggie Moo's ice-cream shop at Hallmark's Crown Center complex, the steel bulls that were punched out to create the silhouettes in a piece called "Bull Wall," near the American Royal Building, and were then set out to graze on a nearby hill—outnumber actual cattle by about fifteen or twenty to zero. The American Royal still exists, but it is better known now as a place where smartly dressed people show their horses, particularly American saddlebreds, than as a place where 4-H kids in overalls sleep in stalls next to their steers. Although commerce related to agriculture is still an element in the city's economy—the Kansas City Board of Trade, for instance, remains the nation's principal trading floor for hard-red winter wheat—a recently published list of the area's twenty-five leading employers does not include any agricultural businesses.

But when I started perusing the Kansas City *Star* a while back, looking for news of the bull, I found to my great surprise that "the Cowtown," which I had never heard employed as an alternate name for Kansas City, is regularly used in the *Star* these days, in the way a New York paper might use "the Big Apple." In fact, the head of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is still struggling


This is your captain speaking.
Please put your tray tables up
and prepare for landing.
THE ONLY THING DRY IS THE INK.
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The Economist

to devise a slogan that sums up the multiple charms of my home town, told me that he's sorry he didn't think of the one that Kansas City, Kansas, came up with a few years ago: "Not Your Ordinary Cowtown." Just about everyone I spoke to expressed admiration for the annual cattle drive that Mike Murphy, a local radio talk-show host, ran through downtown for several years, until a City Hall decision to stop issuing him permits forced him to stage what may be the first suburban cattle drive in the history of the westward expansion. Everyone lamented the fact that the theft of the Future Farmers of America convention by Louisville, a few years ago, means that there are no longer forty thousand fresh-faced kids in blue corduroy F.F.A. jackets around town at American Royal time—even though it used to be said that the average F.F.A. kid got to Kansas City carrying a ten-dollar bill and the Ten Commandments and left a week later without having broken either.

It is thought that being another generation or so removed from the farm makes people less prone to the affliction I call rubaphobia—fear of being taken for a rube—and, given the pace at which American corporations transfer their employees, Kansas City must by now be full of people whose forebears were Ohio factory workers or Pennsylvania miners rather than Midwestern farmers. Charlie Podrebarac, a cartoonist who has a panel called "Cowtown" in the *Star's* Sunday magazine, believes that a greater acceptance of the cattle has been made possible by one simple fact: the smell of the slaughterhouses is gone. "It was hard to embrace the cow when you were exposed to that smell," he told me. I think Podrebarac has a point, although I have to say, speaking as someone who has an enduring childhood memory of trying to hold my nose all the way over the Twelfth Street Viaduct, he might be optimistic in thinking that anyone could forget that smell in only thirty or forty years. With no live cattle in sight, the Hereford bull seems to have become acceptable as "a part of Kansas City's heritage"—a reminder of the past, like the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. In other words, it may be that my home town is more willing to be known as a cowtown now that it isn't one, in which case displaying a bull in the sky in Kansas City is sort of like maintaining an elaborate tomb for Lenin in a country dominated by gangster capitalism.

BOAT

Wind off the small pond where I set my rubber boat down
and climbed in, the child-size paddle
barely long enough to push off or feather rudderless crafts.
Easier to drift in circles across the late-March waters,
my dogs wild at the idea of spring's first cold immersions.
Still, they swam out to try to climb aboard,
swamping my boat until, soaked through,
I paddled back, spilled roaring in the shallows.
Onshore two mothers watched, and their young children,
who neither waved nor smiled, nor I.
Distance forgave us, and the babies
who stood guard, sticks in their little hands raised
to the pack shaking dry, running headlong in their direction.
The mothers swept children onto hips and turned,
barely maneuvering behind them strollers tipping
a wreck of bright bottle bags, toys, blankets, perhaps extra clothes.
Once they looked back to show me myself at fifty,
frightening to them, not yet recognizable, the selfsame,
almost, in nightmares obsolete, who might have called out
to reassure, as I buried my legs
in the sun-warmed sand and lay back, flanked
by three dogs and a rubber boat.
O brilliant, trivial day unmooring.

—*Deborah Digges*

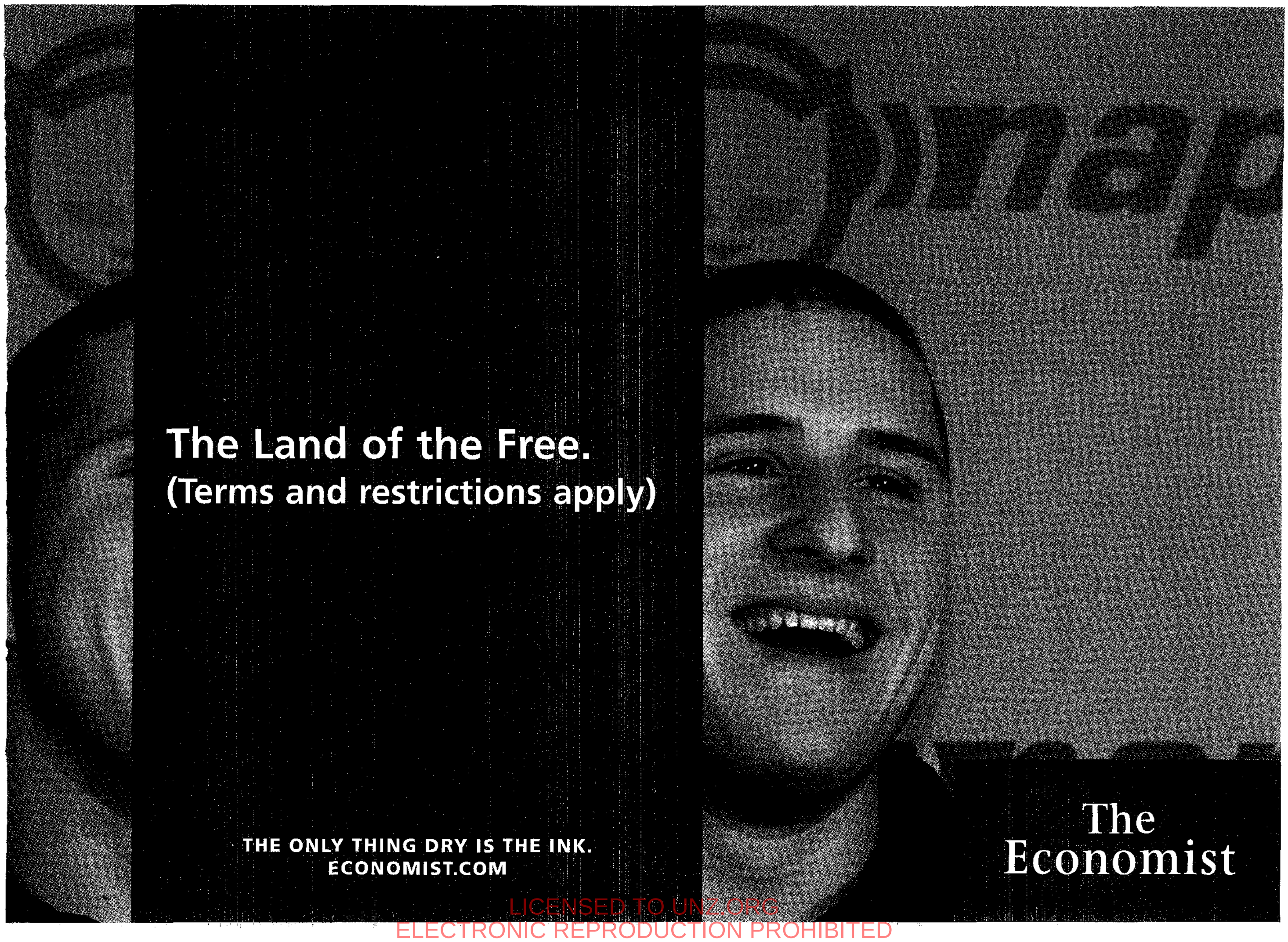
A couple of decades ago, I might have assumed that sensitivity about being associated with farm animals was one reason some people in the Kansas City art community opposed, unsuccessfully, a proposal that Kansas City follow Chicago and New York in displaying decorated cows around town this summer and then auctioning them off for charity—a project known as CowParade. The art people vigorously deny harboring such feelings. (They maintain that their opposition was based largely on the belief that CowParade was a tired gimmick that would result in a lot of money that corporations might otherwise give to legitimate art being drained off into the pockets of some promoter in Connecticut—not to mention the fact that the cows in CowParade, which originated in Zurich, are modelled on Swiss dairy cows rather than on the sort of animals that once awaited their fate in the West Bottoms.) Richard Nadeau, a municipal-art commissioner who led the opposition to CowParade, told me that he is a great admirer of "Bull Wall" and considers the Hereford bull "part of what makes us Kansas City."

"I love that bull," I was told by Marc Wilson, the director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, who said that, in contrast with CowParade, "There's nothing self-consciously cute about the bull. There's no tongue in cheek about it. It's an honest statement of the pride of that organization in what it produces." In fact, every single person I spoke to in Kansas City expressed admiration and affection for the bull, and a few of them said that it was a pity that HNTB wasn't hip enough to leave the bull exactly where it had been for the past forty-seven years. "Imagine!" I said to myself. "The bull is considered hip!"

Understandably, Becky Cotton Zahner, the HNTB architect in charge of the new headquarters, is not among those who believe it would have been hip to keep the bull where it was. She told me that the opportunity for HNTB to create a headquarters with its own identity was one of the arguments for leasing the Hereford building rather than, say, taking more space in the downtown high-rise the company occupied. Under the new arrangement, she pointed out, the bull will be a permanent part of the skyline no matter who owns the building in the future. She said that, unsatisfied with computer-generated photographs showing how the bull would look in various parts of the park, she'd gone out with a helium-filled red balloon and had aides phone her from key sites in the city, just to make sure the bull was plainly visible. She said that she, too, is a friend of the bull. I believed her. She'd won me over with that red-balloon story.

So I find myself reassured that the bull is going to be O.K. Also, I find that I rather like being from a place that refers to itself casually as the Cowtown, even if Hearne Christopher, Jr., the *Star* columnist who uses the phrase most, occasionally does receive a nasty letter about undercutting Kansas City's sophistication and modernity with such a sobriquet. Frankly, "the Cowtown" has a more romantic sound to it than my old vision of Kansas City, which was probably closer to "the Farmtown." A cowtown conjures up John Wayne on a horse rather than Harry Truman behind a plow. Maybe that's one reason it doesn't grate on many Kansas Citians; we live in an era, after all, when rich people from both coasts furnish Western ranches in something called Cowboy High Style, and Americans, despite the invention of the automobile, are said to maintain more horses than at any time in the history of the country.

I could even see myself back in Kansas City leading a parade in honor of the bull's reinstallation. I'm riding a horse from one of the Plaza fountains, having wrested it away from some sort of lightly clothed aboriginal who'd been striking a heroic pose. The bull is there, of course, and a couple of attendants are walking just behind it with the parts of the backup bull. The bucking bull from the Plaza and the bull punch-outs are being herded behind the Hereford bull. So is the Charolais bull, which is walking in a way designed to make him look as large as the Hereford. The Maggie Moo's cow is boogying down the street on her own. In the distance, I hear someone shout, "Head 'em up! Move 'em out!" It's Mike Murphy, at the head of his cattle drive—back from exile in the suburbs. He's followed by CowParade, with some of the decorated fibreglass cows being milked by fibreglass Swiss farmers as they walk. The parade somehow passes landmarks of my childhood which aren't actually there anymore—the old Muehlebach Hotel, where our Harry made his headquarters the night those turkeys in Chicago wrote the headline saying he'd been defeated by Thomas E. Dewey, and the Forum Cafeteria, where I used to eat chow mein when I couldn't get out of going downtown with my mother, and the Tower Theatre, where a cousin of mine sang "Buckle Down, Winsocki" (unless it was "Give Me Five Minutes More") onstage at about the age of five. I wave my cowboy hat—the first cowboy hat I've ever worn—and, forgoing the opportunity to whoop whatever John Wayne would whoop in such a situation, I shout, "I'm home! I'm home!" ♦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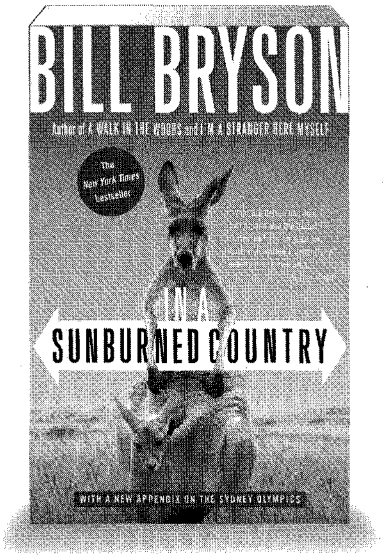
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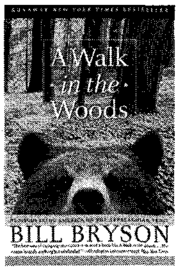
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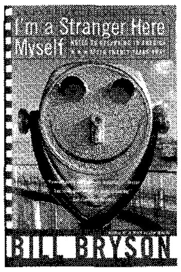
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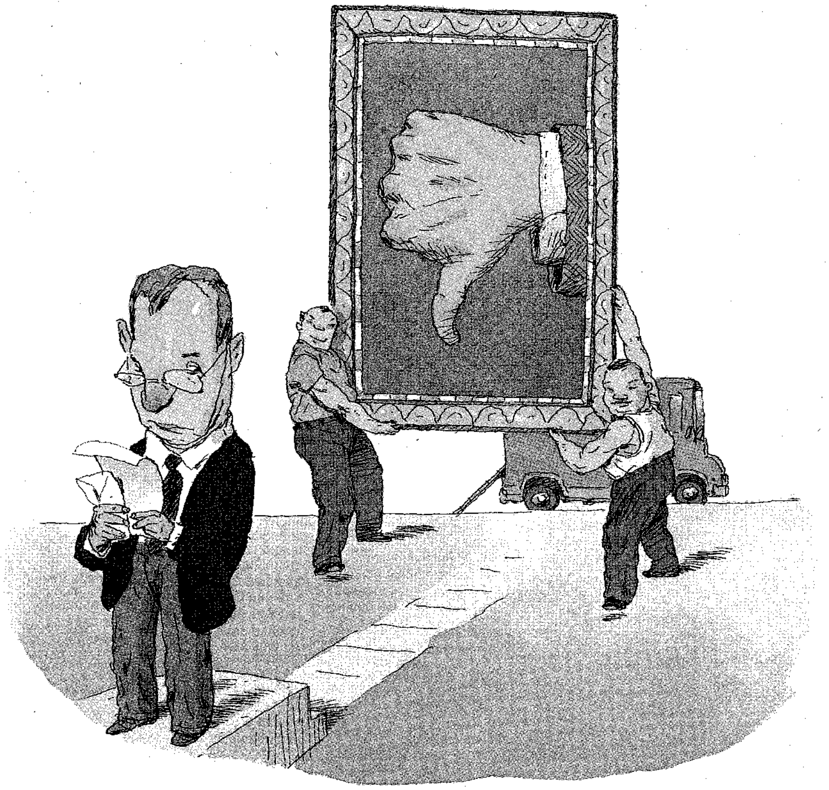
BY JACK HANDEY



Dear Sir:

A few days ago, you phoned us about the job you applied for with our company, and we told you that you did not get the job. However, we are now writing to inform you that you did not get the job. We wanted to make sure you understood that.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

Congratulations! You got the job! That is probably what you were hoping this letter would say. But it doesn't, because you didn't.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

You recently applied for a position with us, but you did not get it, as we have informed you by phone and by mail. However, we have not heard back from you that you completely understand that you failed to get the job. Please call or write and let us know that you realize that you are not employed by us in any way, and never will be.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

Please be advised that the person we hired instead of you has been promoted to department manager, and he has asked us to inform you that, should a position open up, he would not hire you.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

Would you consider taking a job for less pay than we originally discussed, even though we would never offer you such a job?

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

JOHN CUNEO

Dear Sir:

If it is any consolation, we feel that if we had hired you, by now we would have been forced to let you go.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

We are writing to find out what kind of carpeting and curtains you want in your new office. . . . Wait, we made a mistake. You're the wrong person. Oh, well, we're going to go ahead and send this letter to you anyway.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

Could you report for work first thing Monday morning, if you had a job? Just curious.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

While updating our file of job applications, yours was folded into a paper airplane and was accidentally sailed out the window. Would you mind filling out the enclosed application and mailing it back to us in the shape of an airplane?

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

As you may have read in the newspaper, our company has been crippled by a union strike, and we have had to call in outside, freelance help, for which we are paying many times the normal salary. We just thought you should know that.

Sincerely,
Personnel Department

Dear Sir:

It has come to our attention that an employee in our department has been sending you unauthorized and inappropriate letters. We have told him not only that he is fired but that we are hiring you in his place. He left here in an uproar, swearing that he was "going to find (you) and crush (your) head like a walnut." (Some of us think he said "like a peanut," but most think he said "walnut.") If he shows up at your apartment, please explain to him that we were just kidding; we would never hire you.

Sincerely,
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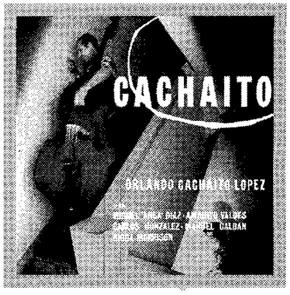

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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

INSIDE OUT

How Inside.com was born, grew, and met an uncertain fate.

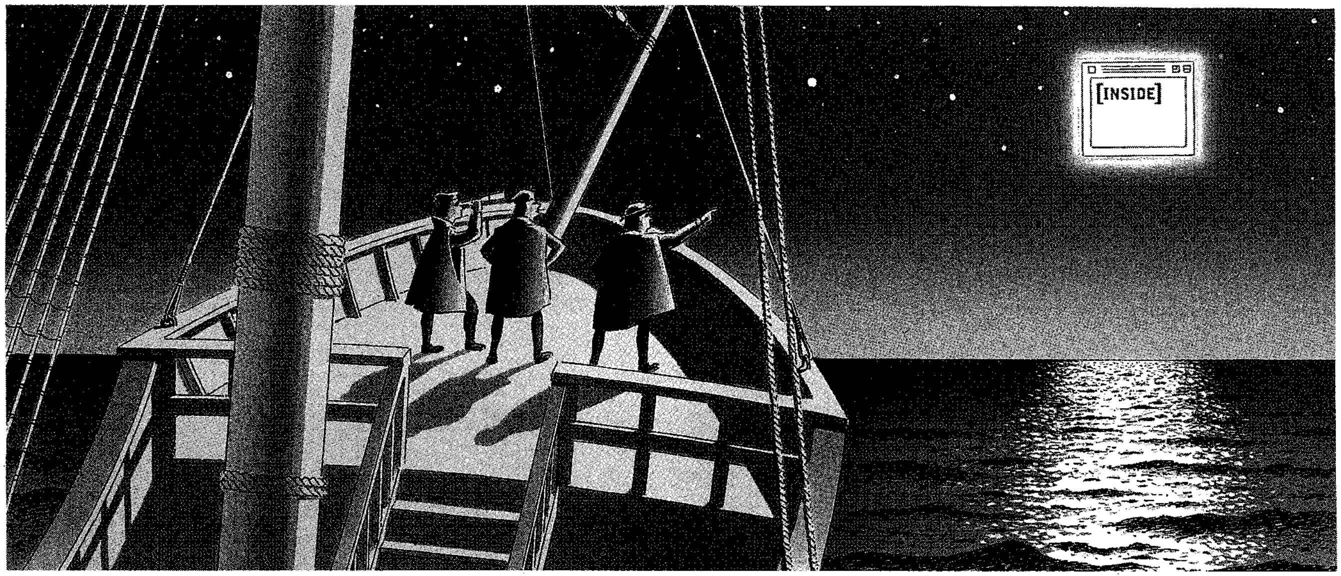
BY KEN AULETTA

The idea came to Kurt Andersen and Michael Hirschorn in early 1999, at the height of what has come to look like the Internet gold rush. Print was doomed, it was said; revolutionary forms of online journalism were at hand, and would also make you rich. As they remember it, Hirschorn telephoned Andersen, his former boss at *New York*, and excitedly proposed an online magazine devoted to the media and entertainment industries. Hirschorn had just been fired as the editor of *Spin*, and was in search of something new.

Andersen was finishing a novel, "Turn of the Century," and had suggested a similar idea to the hedge-fund manager James Cramer, a former Harvard acquaintance, and the co-founder of TheStreet.com, whose stock price had risen more than two hundred per cent on its first day of trading. Hirschorn's call to Andersen led to dinner with Cramer, who arranged for them to meet venture capitalists at Flatiron Partners. Flatiron then took the lead in providing capital. On the business side, Hirschorn, who had been an editor at *Esquire*, enlisted Deanna Brown, a former ad-sales director he had worked with there.

The three became equal partners, and in the summer of 1999 went to work producing a business plan for what was then called *InsideDope.com*. The plan bemoaned the lack of what it called a "must-read online site for members of the cultural elite." *InsideDope* was to fill that lack: to be a place where insiders could get inside information and data that had never been easily obtained. It would provide a way to keep track of book and movie deals, music-industry sales, and advertising spending. It would watch for personnel shifts and gossip in what the partners called "the new entertainment economy." Unlike other online content providers (the *Wall Street Journal* being one notable exception), *InsideDope* expected to make money by charging for subscriptions, and it was widely reported that the partners anticipated a hundred thousand paid subscribers within three years. Subscriptions would account for about forty per cent of revenues, with another forty per cent coming from advertising and the rest from conferences and the sale of exclusive information. The stakes held by Andersen, Hirschorn, and Brown at the start would eventually be reduced to five per cent apiece. To recruit good journalists, they would set aside twenty-five per cent of the ownership for the staff.

Flatiron agreed to put up two-thirds of the initial five-million-dollar startup cost for the company, which would be called Powerful Media; its online name would be changed from *InsideDope* to *Inside.com*. The "name journalists" who were hired, Brown boasted, would bring "brand awareness" to the enterprise. Had Andersen still been the editor of *Spy*, which he co-founded in 1986, he might have smirked at the language: Andersen, a forty-six-year-old who favors black jackets and open-necked shirts, and who displayed a cool wit in columns for *Time* and for *The New Yorker* and as the editor of *New York*, was now described without evident irony by his partner Hirschorn as *Inside's* "ambassador, building relationships in New York and Los Angeles." "Ambassador" is not a word that springs to mind as a description of Andersen, for he tends to look off into the distance when he speaks; he is more astringent observer than cheerleader. The thirty-seven-year-old Hirschorn, who has a considerable girth and wears polo shirts and sneakers, would run



"I was mostly attracted to the cult of personality," an Inside.com reporter said. "I was afraid of missing out on something cool."

GUY BILLOUT

the operation from the inside. He had served as editor of *Spin*, executive editor of *New York*, and features editor at *Esquire*, and he brought an inclusive management style.

Prior to *Inside.com's* electronic début, in the spring of 2000, Andersen and Hirschorn E-mailed to the staff a six-page, single-spaced "first installment of our editorial playbook." *Inside.com*, they said, must be both "fresh and definitive":

> This is a great opportunity to really help invent a form, not unlike magazines at the beginning of the 20th century, or even newspapers and the novel in the 18th and 19th. . . . Our key journalistic goals: Correctness. Insiderness. Juiciness. Utility. Honesty. Smartness. Go kill.

The partners rented loft space alongside other dot-coms in an old warehouse in West Chelsea and hired a staff of about ninety, the majority of them journalists. *Inside* held a media launch party attended by Courtney Love, among others, at a New York nightspot, Eugene, and a kickoff party in Los Angeles attended by the director Curtis Hanson, who was planning to direct a movie of Andersen's novel, for which Andersen would write the screenplay.

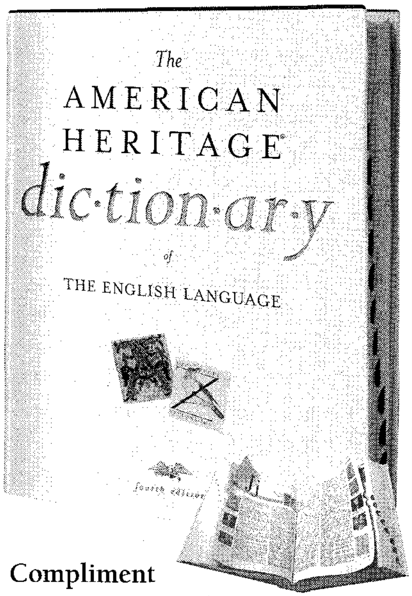
In its first year, *Inside* scored some scoops on the media beat: Stephen Battaglio's account of how Jeff Zucker would become the new president of NBC Entertainment, replacing Garth Ancier; David Carr and Lorne Manly's account of the closing of *George;* Sara Nelson's "real time" account of the eight-million-dollar auction of Hillary Clinton's book; Roger Parloff's early dissection of Napster's weak legal case. In addition, Andersen, especially, proved masterly in attracting publicity for *Inside,* and for a while he and his partners were ubiquitous in the media. But, even as it found its footing as a presence in the increasingly crowded journalism world, *Inside* failed as a business. "The partners figured if they were out there and visible, *Inside* would go public and they'd make money," an investor who studied their books says. "They never had a business plan." And their timing was off, unlike such Web-content companies as GeoCities. "If all the meetings to raise money had occurred in 1996," James Cramer says, "they would have gotten a one-and-a-half-billion-dollar offer from Yahoo! a year and a half later."

Andersen, Hirschorn, and Brown designed a vast, non-partitioned space, part newsroom and part commune, with views of the Hudson River. The new staff included David Carr, who moved up from Washington, where he had been the editor of the *City Paper*. "I was afraid of missing out on something cool," he says. "I was mostly attracted to the cult of personality around these two guys"—Andersen and Hirschorn. "No one who worked for them ever came out for the worst." Stephen Battaglio, who had been the New York bureau chief of *The Hollywood Reporter*, says, "My sources knew who I was, but my publication had no visibility in New York. These two guys were New York media guys, and I knew that if I went with them my work would get attention. And it did." Michael Cieply, who had covered Hollywood for the Los Angeles *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* before becoming a film producer, joined as the West Coast editorial director, because "I was unexpectedly swept away by the charisma of the thing."

The Insiders shared a pioneer spirit, a desire to break out, and maybe even get rich on the day they went public or sold the company. The trade publications they tended to admire were those which approached their industries broadly, and with some skepticism, such as *The American Lawyer*, which appeared in the late seventies, and *The Industry Standard,* which appeared in the late nineties. They had respect for *Brill's Content* but thought that it suffered from what one recruit called a pious, "church-lady tone." (Andersen, in his novel, set in the near future, described a cocktail party where among the guests were "people with no interest in discussing . . . the thirty-one-page pundits' roundtable critique of pundit-on-pundit punditry that appeared in the final issue of *Brill's Content*.")

Few seemed to be troubled by the fact that online magazines like *Slate* had abandoned paid subscriptions, or that advertisers disdained the kind of banner advertising that *Inside* banked on selling. In the euphoric milieu in which *Inside* was born, those who questioned the dot-com rage were treated as old-media fogies—brick-and-mortar types who just didn't

Celebrate their intelligence.



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—*THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

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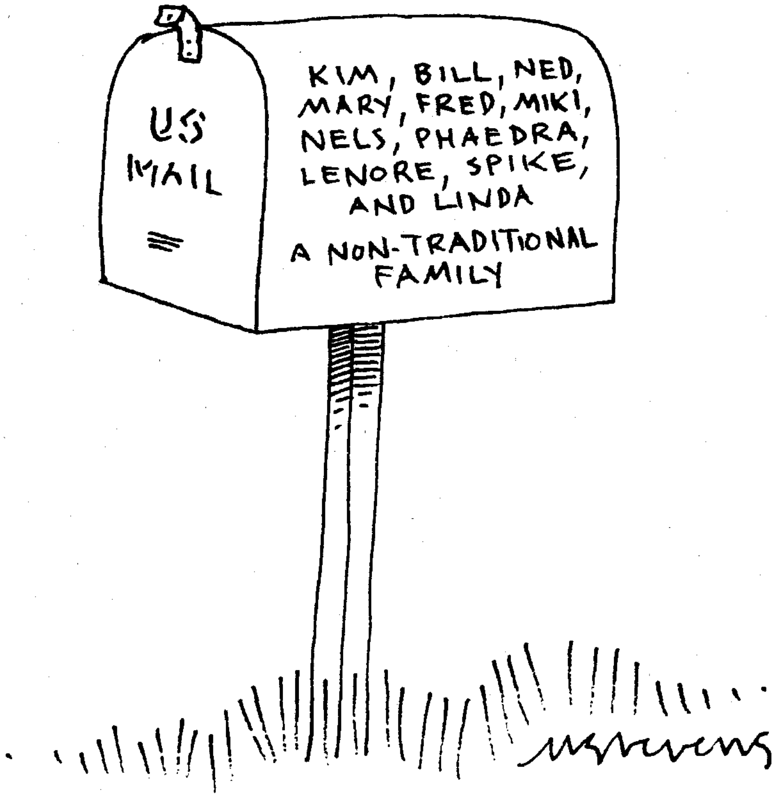
get it. Jonathan Weber, the editor of *The Industry Standard*, suspended his skepticism when it came to what he called the "revolution"—a "struggle" between "the Eastern establishment," or "old order," and "the renegades of the West."

By the time *Inside* appeared, in May of 2000, the signs of decline were everywhere. Dot-com stocks were beginning to collapse. Venture-capital money was drying up. And yet the downturn in the stock market did not immediately have an impact on *Inside*. It raised twenty-three million more dollars in April, bringing its total to twenty-eight million. Raising money was "as easy as getting laid in 1969," Andersen famously joked.

Andersen and Hirschorn were ecstatic. They were bucking the trend, and their staff, caught up in the spirit of the endeavor, concentrated on the sheer fun of almost instant reporting on the Web and of writing in a conversational style. "We were ebullient," Sara Nelson, who had written book reviews for *Glamour*, worked on an AOL consumer book site, and now covered the book industry, remembers. "People were calling me back who never called me before. People were calling me that I used to be afraid to call." When *Inside* broke a story, or was credited in the *Times* or elsewhere, a flashing red police light that was kept on David Carr's desk would be turned on. Hirschorn, often the first to arrive at the office and the last to leave, edited most of the pieces and was much loved by the staff. Andersen's presence was more complicated. Staffers were surprised at his accessibility and his modesty, but they also found him to be elusive. "Writers were always eager to have him edit their stories, because it was a compliment," the managing editor, Chris Peacock, recalls. "There was an eagerness on everyone's part to perform for him."

In the summer of 2000, despite the problems in the Web economy—other dot-com content sites were laying off personnel and folding—the staff of *Inside* seems not to have been worried. "It's amazing how strong denial can be," Sara Nelson says. Nor was the business side yet alarmed. Deanna Brown had worked for startups, including that of *Brill's Content*, where she had been president. By the fall of 2000, she had raised seven million dollars more for *Inside*, bringing the total to just under thirty-five million. "We raised enough to carry us through 2001," she says, "which would get us in striking distance of profitability."

In retrospect, Fred Wilson, the managing partner at Flatiron, says, "the critical mistake" was to start a biweekly print magazine in December, 2000, on the cusp of what turned out to be an advertising recession. It consumed, according to various estimates, between eight and fifteen million dollars of capital. And although the editors proclaimed that *Inside* was an anti-spin publication, the partners were not always forthcoming—and not always in agreement—about some of *Inside's* own business data. A senior *Inside* executive told me that *Inside* had about twenty thousand paid subscribers. In an E-mail exchange, I mentioned to Andersen that press accounts had put the number at ten thousand. Andersen replied, "I can live with that." When I asked if the number was lower, Andersen said, "I'm afraid I'm not going to comment." Was ten thousand an accurate number? "No, it isn't," he finally conceded. One person who knows *Inside's* finances intimately says that the highest number of subscribers at any point was approximately twelve hundred. Confronted with this low number, one of the partners admitted that the peak subscriber base "was closer to five thousand," and has now fallen to about half that.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A NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILY
mstevens

By the end of 2000, Kurt Andersen knew that *Inside* would not become profitable in the foreseeable future and would need to find a partner or a buyer sooner than anticipated. In the commentary he offers during a weekly public-radio show he has ("Studio 360"), Andersen said of the Presidential campaign, "I am a sucker for the fantastic surprise ending. I like O. Henry stories. . . . I like twist endings."

He got one. In early January of this year, Steven Brill, the chairman of Brill Media Holdings, and Brill's friend Tom Rogers, the chairman of the media company Primedia, announced that they were merging. Brill would continue to run, independently, the monthly *Brill's Content*, and also Contentville.com, an E-commerce venture he owns. The two companies would acquire a substantial minority interest in one another, and Primedia would place a hundred and seventy-two of its Web sites, newsletters, magazines, databases, conferences, and other products that cover the media industry in a subsidiary, Media Central, which Brill would run; these outlets reach around sixty thousand subscribers, who pay an average of about six hundred dollars per year. Later that week, Brill phoned Kurt Andersen and invited him to lunch to discuss how their two companies could work together.

Brill is Andersen's temperamental opposite—a hot personality. He is barrel-chested, wears ties and suspenders and cufflinks, and chomps on cigars. He had a baseball diamond constructed behind his house in Westchester, where he plays softball and doesn't hide his hatred for losing. He phoned James Cramer, who had invested in Brill's company as well as in Andersen's, and recruited him to lobby Andersen. "I don't believe that anyone is going to give the company more money," Cramer remembers telling Andersen.

Brill recalls that at lunch he told Andersen that Media Central "had a lot of paying customers but not enough talent, and he had talent and not enough customers." Brill said that he wanted to establish a central hub for his various media Web sites, and *Inside.com* could be it. Andersen did not say yes or no, but agreed to talk again. (Andersen and I were colleagues for a few years at *The New Yorker*, although we rarely intersected. I know Brill better, having worked with him at *New York* in the seventies.)

Andersen, Hirschorn, and Brown caucused and agreed to survey other prospective partners or buyers. Andersen or Brown spoke with executives from NBC, Advance Publications (which owns Condé Nast), AOL Time Warner, Ziff Davis, Cahners (a division of Reed Elsevier, which publishes *Variety* and *Publishers Weekly*), and the Washington Post Company, but these organizations either were not interested or would not move quickly enough. Powerful Media had an in-depth conversation with one of its own investors, Standard Media International, which owns *The Industry Standard*. Throughout these negotiations, Brill kept in close touch with Andersen, Cramer, and the venture capitalists, particularly Fred Wilson, at Flatiron.

"We had this quiet moment," Brown recalls, "the three of us, where we asked, 'Do we take the bird in hand?' " The Brill deal was their sole firm offer, and thus "the best decision for the legacy of the brand and the staff." On the other hand, Brown says, "Personally, it was tough for me, because I knew there was no role for me at the new company." Like Brill, she was the C.E.O. And Brill was openly critical of Brown.

By March, rumors of a possible sale had begun to appear in print. The revenues the partners had been counting on from conferences organized by Andersen were not materializing. That month, they were down to approximately nine million dollars; the venture capitalists were growing impatient. Deanna Brown says she knew that another round of financing was needed, which was probably out of the question.

An announcement of the sale to Brill was made on April 2nd. Around a small table at a press conference at the Palace Hotel, Brill extolled *Inside's* journalistic product, and vowed that his own magazine, under a relatively new editor, David Kuhn, would become more like *Inside*, with greater emphasis on the business side of the media. Flanking Brill at the table, Andersen, Hirschorn, Rogers, and Kuhn talked about what a good deal this was. Certainly, Brill Media could now claim the talent assembled by Powerful Media, and the *Inside.com* brand name, Web site, and magazine. It also got what Fred Wilson says was approximately eight million dollars in wire transfers. Deanna Brown said that she would leave, and Andersen and Hirschorn said that they would sign contracts to stay for at least two years, but these had escape clauses. David Carr, who covered the press conference for *Inside*, asked the core question in his dispatch: "Is this a return of synergy or just an amassing of crippled assets?"

The staff at *Inside* took some comfort in Brill's career as a fiercely independent journalist. It soon became clear, however, that the two cultures did not easily fit. *Inside* moved from Chelsea to a warren of offices in Rockefeller Center. Almost fifty *Inside* employees were laid off. Staff members worried that Andersen and Hirschorn would not stay, and that Brill, who was known for yelling at employees and fellow softball players, would be his usual combative self. When Andersen invited Brill to address the staff, Brill told them that *Inside* would become a marketing and delivery vehicle for his other trade sites, and when questions were raised he said bluntly, "You are in the trade business." David Carr says, "We didn't want to hear that. People acted like he was the Antichrist."

On the day the remaining staff of *Inside* moved uptown, Sara Nelson invited the old gang to a party at her apartment, in SoHo. About fifty people, including Andersen, Hirschorn, and Brown, drank wine and beer and ate a six-foot-long hero from Katz's Delicatessen. David Carr, with help from Whitney Joiner, a young reporter at *Inside*, performed a puppet show. The puppets were Andersen dressed as a king; Hirschorn as a lovable Teddy bear; Brown as a lady; and Brill as a lamb. The show opened, Carr recounts, with *Inside's* launch party and its high hopes, and this scene ended with Hirschorn knocking over Andersen when he spots Courtney Love and races to greet her. The second scene takes place ten months later and reveals Andersen at his desk, taking a phone call and talking in a hushed tone. "Who was that?" Hirschorn asks.

"Steve Brill," Andersen says. "He wants to buy the business."

They look at each other and say, in unison, "He's not cool enough."

In another scene, Sara Nelson recalls, Hirschorn reassures the staff about the sale to Brill: "It's cool. It's cool." Andersen says, "This is a way to keep the DNA of *Inside* alive." Then Andersen escorts the lamb—Brill—to meet the staff, and he begins by saying, "I love what you guys do. This is what I want in my company." Brill says that *Inside* will become a successful trade publication because the only way to guarantee revenue streams is to have a trade publication.

"What Steve really means," Andersen explains, "is that we will report on the media and entertainment."

Nonsense. Brill yanks off his sheep costume to reveal that he is a wolf.

The final scene features Hirschorn asking Andersen what he's doing. "I'm the vice-chairman and I'm in charge of strategic initiatives," Andersen says. As he speaks, he morphs into a grasshopper and hops away.

"What *Inside* had, more than any place I ever worked at, was a camaraderie," Lorne Manly, *Inside's* media editor, says. "We really felt we were doing something that was new and that had impact." Although *Inside.com* failed as a business and the staff feared for their livelihood, few of them had a bad word to say about Andersen, Hirschorn, or Brown. They thought that the nice guys had lost.

There are many reasons for the de-

Victoria Roberts

"You've let more than your Met membership slip, haven't you, Lorna?"

• •

feat, including some beyond the reach of the partners. But one reason was that the differences between Andersen and Brown, who wanted to restrict how much information they gave away for free, and Hirschorn, who wanted to attract a bigger audience, were never resolved—the tension between building a business and building a brand. Nor was there a dominant business leader. Andersen genuinely admires Deanna Brown, but, he says, she "is not a strong numbers person." As a result, in October, 1999, the partners hired "a strong chief financial officer." One senior staff member of *Inside*, speaking anonymously, says that Andersen is "fabulously charismatic," and that "people naturally want to follow him," but "the flip side of this" is that he lacked the "next step" of leadership: a take-charge personality that gets in the trenches. "We had a three-headed leadership," this person says. "In crunches, Kurt tended to disappear. Michael thus became the dominant operating presence." Michael was good, and Deanna Brown was good. But "what they were trying to pull off required brilliance," he says.

On May 2nd, Brill called a meeting, which he chaired, and which was attended by Andersen and Hirschorn, among others. Brill's starting premise, he said, was that *Inside.com* had to be thought of as a newsstand, one that displayed and sold an array of Media Central's publications.

Implicit in Brill's comments was a hope that *Inside* would produce revenues not just from pay-per-view or monthly subscriptions but by luring subscribers to his other trade publications. An annual subscription to a Media Central newsletter called *Inside Book Publishing Report*, for example, is nearly seven hundred dollars, and some newsletters cost a thousand dollars, so this is a potentially lucrative source of revenue for Brill. Tom Rogers, Brill's partner and Primedia's C.E.O., explains in the language of the business world: "The point of *Inside* was to give Brill an online vehicle . . . through which to drive subscription revenue . . . which is what we think in the business-to-business space is the biggest opportunity for business-to-business information." That was not what the people at *Inside* had set out to do.

Mostly through layoffs, there has been a forty-per-cent decrease in *Inside's* editorial staff, according to Hirschorn, from fifty-three to thirty-three; David Carr, Michael Cieply, Kyle Pope, and Richard Siklos are among those who chose to leave. Steve Brill "has to woo people," Hirschorn says. But Brill does not woo people in the accustomed manner. He says that part of his job "is figuring out how to keep good people," and he has awarded broader responsibilities to some *Inside* staff members, including Sara Nelson, Lorne Manly, Stephen Battaglio and Scott Collins. Nevertheless, he admits, "I have a style that is different." As an executive, he is abrasive. "Sometimes paying attention to them is asking, 'How come you didn't call this person before writing this story?' Some people think that's bad for morale. What about the morale of the person they're writing about?" Andersen, on the other hand, cautions that one thing he learned from his experience at *Spy* is that good people "are not replaceable."

Brill's Content, meanwhile, has gone from a monthly to a quarterly, and Brill has announced that he plans to reduce its circulation from "about three hundred and seventy-five thousand if it were audited today"—not four hundred thousand, as is usually proclaimed—to about two hundred and twenty-five thousand. By cutting back, Brill says, he will break even. Gone are the plans to merge its editorial mission with *Inside's*. Gone as well is *Brill's Content's* projected December deficit of $1.7 million, which Brill says he feared would swell to twice that, thus prompting him to seek outside financing.

Brill has involved Andersen and Hirschorn in decision-making (the two, along with Kuhn, have been named vice-chairmen of Brill Media). Andersen says that Brill is "intellectually nimble" and has praised him for acting with "mind-bending speed, which is great." He and Hirschorn agree with the decisions Brill made about charging three dollars and ninety-five cents for a monthly subscription to *Inside* and forty cents per article. "I don't think we could have made them," Andersen graciously says of these decisions. "We would have temporized." Hirschorn is staying on as the editor of *Inside*, and Brill says of Andersen, "I think he'll end up staying." Andersen himself says he won't. "There's relatively little for me to do," he says. He wants to concentrate on a second novel, screenplays, and his weekly radio program.

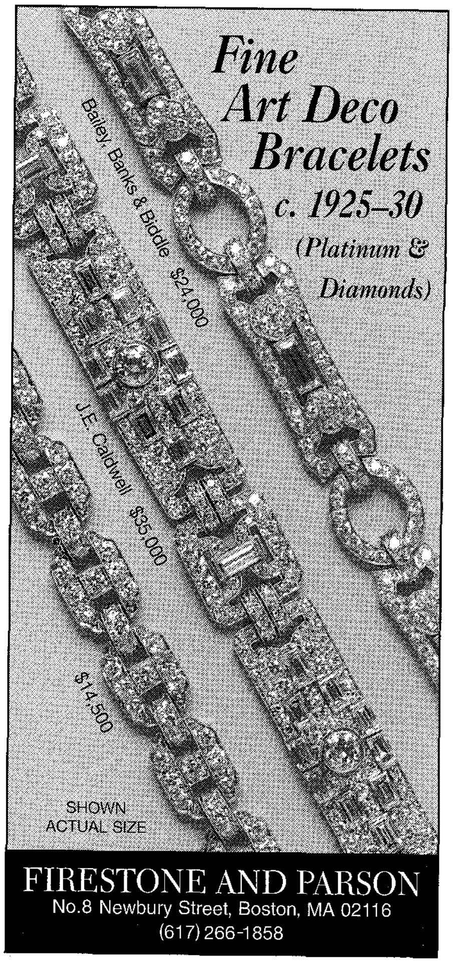
The brief marriage has already had its share of spats. During the week of May 14th, for example, Deanna Brown and Fred Wilson, representing Powerful Media, exchanged E-mails and angry words with Brill, who says that he is being asked to come up with hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover unrecorded accounts payables and inflated accounts receivables. "It turns out that the people running the business side there never kept good books so they could pay writers." He also says that promised ad revenues turned out to be phantom. But he adds, "I don't think there will be litigation," because he and the *Inside* people are "working it out."

Deanna Brown says that it is "absolutely untrue" that *Inside* did not keep good books, but she wants to avoid a confrontation. These are the normal kinks of "two companies in transition," she says. As for Brill's assertion that he is suddenly burdened with hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs, she concedes that "the payables are probably higher than on the day the deal was signed, because we didn't have all the invoices in." At the same time, she says, Brill is "underestimating receivables" from advertising. Fred Wilson, like Brown, has implicitly acknowledged many of Brill's facts but places them in this context: "In the process of doing the deal at lightning speed, some things didn't get done that should have gotten done."

All this is taking place as the Web culture itself evolves—or doesn't. The Internet, Hirschorn says, "feels like a transitional medium." One can get possible glimpses of its future in more personalized Web models—in sites like the journalist Mickey Kaus's (Kausfiles.com). Daily, Kaus posts his quirky opinions on subjects ranging from welfare reform to journalistic conflicts of interest. "The imperative is to put it up even if it's a bit raw," he says. "The raw stuff is what people like best." Partly because he writes for *Slate*, he attracts what he says is up to six thousand visitors a day and up to twelve thousand visitors each week. He says his monthly costs are a hundred dollars for a server to store and send his newsletter; two hundred dollars for a subscription to Lexis-Nexis for research; and twenty dollars for Internet access. After an initial six-hundred-dollar payment for a software designer, his upgrade expenses have been small. He does not include the cost of his time, which he estimates at four hours a day. His revenue depends on "the tip jar," with people sending him about seventy-five dollars a week, and on advertisers, of which he has had one. A site like Jim Romenesko's poynter.org/medianews allows readers to see press-related stories each day, including the free stories that appear on *Inside*. But if you can do this for nothing, will anyone be willing to pay for *Inside.com*?

Yes, Brill says, because *Inside's* information has value and will not be available elsewhere. Bloomberg Professional Service has been able to charge twelve hundred and eighty-five dollars a month for electronic information it says cannot be replicated on the Web. As of March 31st, according to a *Wall Street Journal* spokeswoman, the *Journal's* online version had grown to five hundred and seventy-four thousand paid subscribers, with those who subscribe to the paper paying twenty-nine dollars per year and those who don't paying fifty-nine dollars. James Cramer believes that a second generation of Web users is less hostile to paying for content. "When I started, no one used a credit card on the Web," Cramer says. "Now everyone does." The key ingredient, Steve Brill believes, is good content. "The business plan is the editorial plan," he says. Build it and, if it is good content, they will come. But perhaps they will not pay. Tom Phillips, an investor in Powerful Media who has had his share of victories and losses as an Internet entrepreneur, says, "Searching is the dominant mode of the Internet. So the mentality of the information seeker is: I can find it if I keep looking. Why should I pay for anything?"

In an *Inside* piece last December entitled "The Revolution Is Glorious, and the Sky Is Falling—Get Used to It," Kurt Andersen wrote that one could look at Christopher Columbus as a failure: "His business model did not pan out: no Western route to Asia, hardly any gold, abandonment by his investors, not much of an enduring first-mover advantage for Spain . . . *but he fucking discovered America*." Andersen, looking back, and forward, from the second floor of Wu Liang Ye, a bustling Chinese restaurant across the street from his temporary office, on West Forty-eighth Street, couldn't be sure what he had discovered. He didn't know whether *Inside.com* would be seen as a pioneer or as a failure. But of this he was certain: "People are making it up as they go along. There are no precedents, and no comparables." And, so far, few good business models. ♦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A REPORTER AT LARGE

WRONG TURN

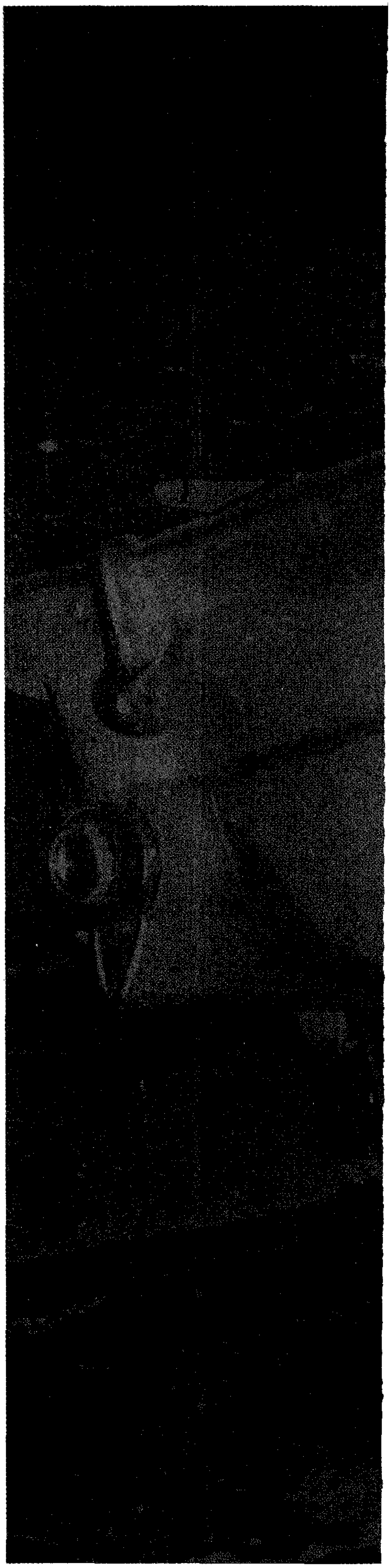
How the fight to make America's highways safer went off course.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

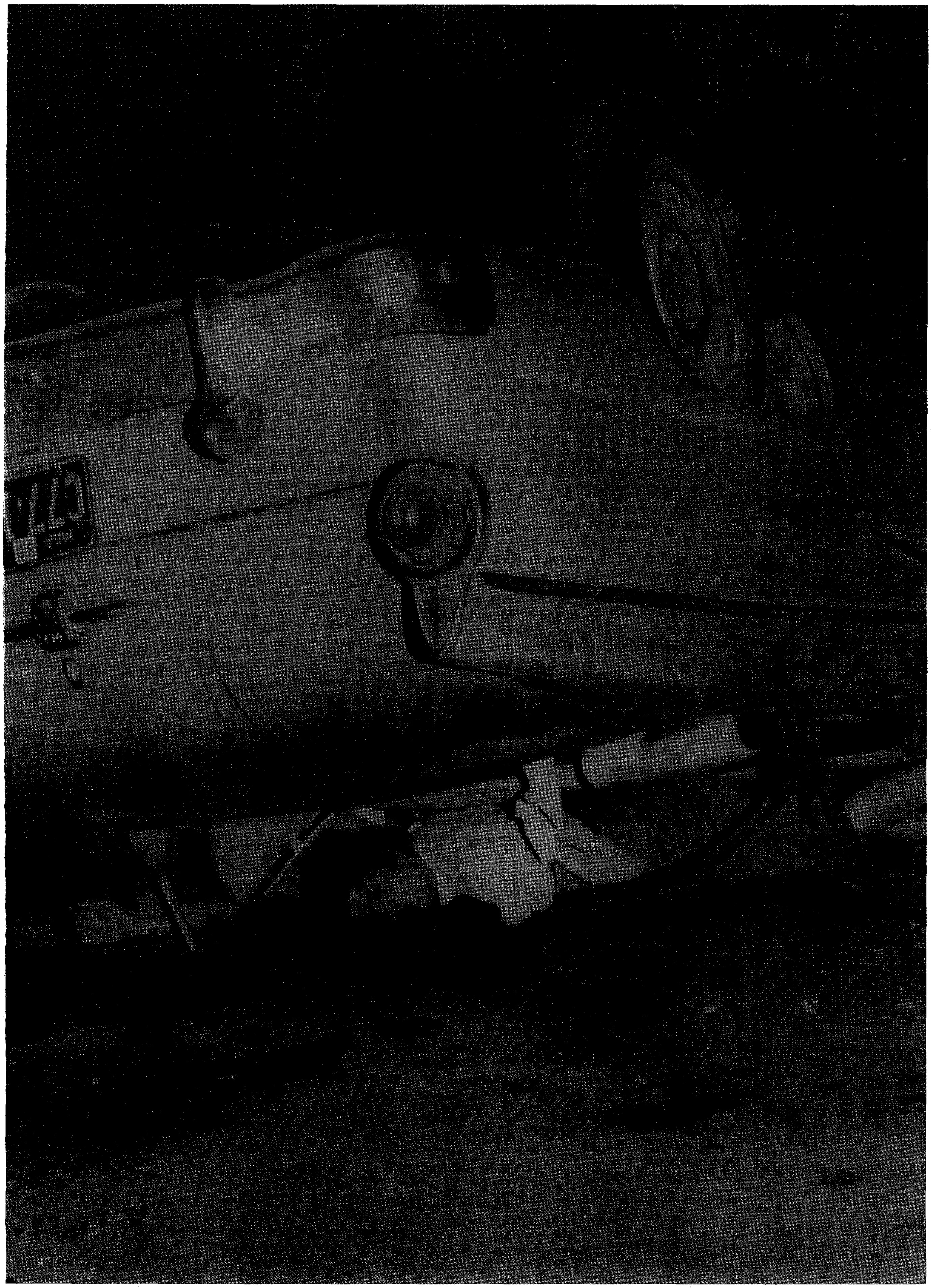
I. BANG

Every two miles, the average driver makes four hundred observations, forty decisions, and one mistake. Once every five hundred miles, one of those mistakes leads to a near collision, and once every sixty-one thousand miles one of those mistakes leads to a crash. When people drive, in other words, mistakes are endemic and accidents inevitable, and that is the first and simplest explanation for what happened to Robert Day on the morning of Saturday, April 9, 1994. He was driving a 1980 Jeep Wagoneer from his home, outside Philadelphia, to spend a day working on train engines in Winslow Township, New Jersey. He was forty-four years old, and made his living as an editor for the Chilton Book Company. His ten-year-old son was next to him, in the passenger seat. It was a bright, beautiful spring day. Visibility was perfect, and the roadway was dry, although one of the many peculiarities of car crashes is that they happen more often under ideal road conditions than in bad weather. Day's route took him down the Atlantic City Expressway to Fleming Pike, a two-lane country road that winds around a sharp curve and intersects, about a mile later, with Egg Harbor Road. In that final stretch of Fleming Pike, there is a scattering of houses and a fairly thick stand of trees on either side of the road, obscuring all sight lines to the left and right. As he approached the intersection, then, Day could not have seen a blue-and-gray 1993 Ford Aerostar minivan travelling between forty and fifty miles per hour southbound on Egg Harbor, nor a white 1984 Mazda 626 travelling at approximately fifty miles per hour in the other direction. Nor, apparently, did he see the stop sign at the corner, or the sign a tenth of a mile before that, warning of the intersection ahead. Day's son, in the confusing aftermath of the accident, told police that he was certain his father had come to a stop at the corner. But the accident's principal witness says he never saw any brake lights on the Wagoneer, and, besides, there is no way that the Jeep could have done the damage that it did from a standing start. Perhaps Day was distracted. The witness says that Day's turn signal had been on since he left the expressway. Perhaps he was looking away and looked back at the road at the wrong time, since there is an area, a few hundred yards before Egg Harbor Road, just on the near side of a little ridge, where the trees and houses make it look as if Fleming Pike ran without interruption well off into the distance. We will never know, and in any case it does not matter much. Day merely did what all of us do every time we get in a car: he made a mistake. It's just that he was unlucky enough that his mistake led him directly into the path of two other cars.

The driver of the Ford Aerostar was Stephen Capoferri, then thirty-nine. He worked in the warehouse of Whitehall Laboratories, in southern New Jersey. He had just had breakfast with his parents and was on his way to the bank. The driver of the Mazda was Elizabeth Wolfrum. She was twenty-four. She worked as the manager of a liquor store. Her eighteen-year-old sister, Julie, was in the passenger seat; a two-year-old girl was in the back seat. Because of the vegetation on either side of Fleming Pike, Capoferri did not see Day's vehicle until it was just eighty-five feet from the point of impact, and if we assume that Day was travelling at forty miles per hour, or fifty-nine feet per second, that means that Capoferri had about 1.5 seconds to react. That is scarcely enough time. The average adult needs about that long simply to translate an observation ("That car is



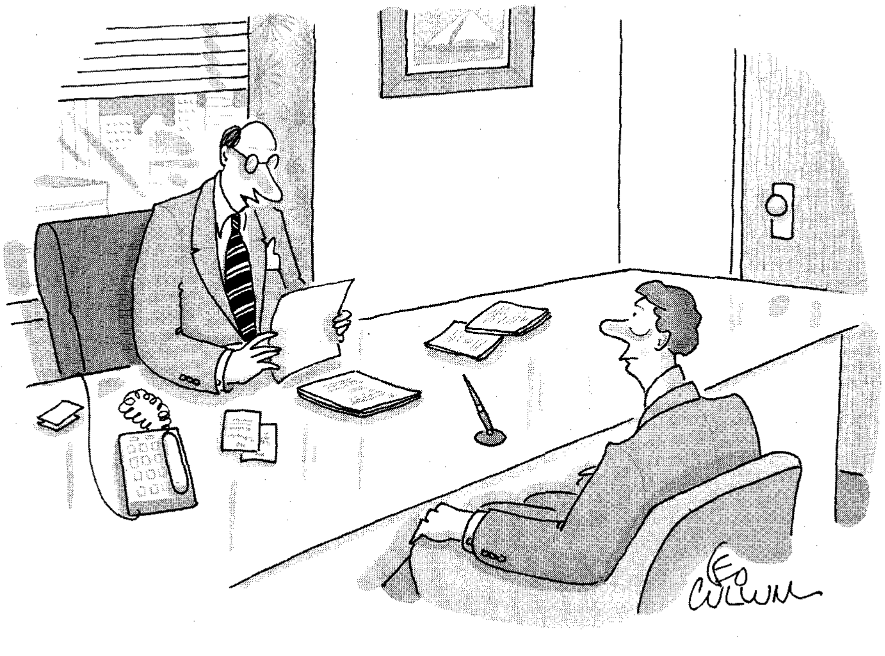
Detail from Andy Warhol's "Five Deaths." Advocates like Ralph Nader focussed on the second collision, inside the car: "A crash without an injury. That idea was very powerful."



"FIVE DEATHS" (1963) ©2001 ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION/ARS, NY going awfully fast") into an action ("I ought to hit my brake"). Capoferri hit Day broadside, at a slight angle, the right passenger side of the Aerostar taking most of the impact. The Jeep was pushed sidewise, but it kept going forward, pulling off the grille and hood of the Aerostar, and sending it into a two-hundred-and-seventy-degree counterclockwise spin. As the Jeep lurched across the intersection, it slammed into the side of Wolfrum's Mazda. The cars slapped together, and then skidded together across the intersection, ending on the grass on the far, southeastern corner. According to documents filed by Elizabeth Wolfrum's lawyers, Wolfrum suffered eighteen injuries, including a ruptured spleen, multiple liver lacerations, brain damage, and fractures to the legs, ribs, ankles, and nose. Julie Wolfrum was partially ejected from the Mazda and her face hit the ground. She subsequently underwent seventeen separate surgical procedures and remained in intensive care for forty-four days. In post-crash photographs, their car looks as if it had been dropped head first from an airplane. Robert Day suffered massive internal injuries and was pronounced dead two hours later, at West Jersey Hospital. His son was bruised and shaken up. Capoferri walked away largely unscathed.

"Once the impact occurred, I did a spin," he remembers. "I don't recall doing that. I may have blacked out. It couldn't have been for very long. I wanted to get out. I was trying to judge how I was. I was having a little trouble breathing. But I knew I could walk. My senses were gradually coming back to normal. I'm pretty sure I went to Day's vehicle first. I went to the driver's side. He was semi-conscious. He had blood coming out of his mouth. I tried to keep him awake. His son was in the passenger seat. He had no injuries. He said, 'Is my father O.K.?' I seem to remember looking in the Mazda. My first impression was that they were dead, because the driver's side of the vehicle was very badly smashed in. I think they needed the 'jaws of life' to get them out. There was a little girl in the back. She was crying."

Capoferri has long black hair and a beard and the build of a wrestler. He is a thoughtful man who chooses his words carefully. As he talked, he was driving his Taurus back toward the scene of the accident, and he was apologetic that he could not recall more details of those moments leading up to the accident. But what is there to remember? In the popular imagination—fuelled by the car crashes of Hollywood movies, with their special effects and complicated stunts—an accident is a protracted sequence, played out in slow motion, over many frames. It is not that way in real life. The time that elapsed between the collision of Capoferri and Day and Day and Wolfrum was probably no more than twenty-five milliseconds, faster than the blinking of an eye, and the time that elapsed between the moment Capoferri struck Day and the moment his van came to a rest, two hundred and seventy degrees later, was probably no more than a second. Capoferri said that a friend of his, who lived right on the corner where the accident happened, told him later that all the crashing and spinning and skidding sounded like an single, sharp explosion—*bang!*



"Would you mind elaborating on this section of the résumé, which claims that you're my love child?"

II. THE PASSIVE APPROACH

In the middle part of the last century, a man named William Haddon changed forever the way Americans think about car accidents. Haddon was, by training, a medical doctor and an epidemiologist and, by temperament, a New Englander—tall and reed-thin, with a crewcut, a starched white shirt, and a bow tie. He was exacting and cerebral, and so sensitive to criticism that it was said of him that he could be "blistered by moonbeams." He would not eat mayonnaise, or anything else subject to bacterial contamination. He hated lawyers, which was ironic, because it was lawyers who became his biggest disciples. Haddon was discovered by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, when Moynihan was working for Averell Harriman, then the Democratic governor of New York State. It was 1958. Moynihan was chairing a meeting on traffic safety, in Albany's old state-executive-office chambers, and a young man at the back of the room kept asking pointed questions. "What's your name?" Moynihan eventually asked, certain he had collared a Republican spy. "Haddon, sir," the young man answered. He was just out of the Harvard School of Public Health, and convinced that what the field of traffic safety needed was the rigor of epidemiology. Haddon asked Moynihan what data he was using. Moynihan shrugged. He wasn't using any data at all.

Haddon and Moynihan went across the street to Yezzi's, a local watering hole, and Moynihan fell under Haddon's spell. The orthodoxy of that time held that safety was about reducing accidents—educating drivers, training them, making them slow down. To Haddon, this approach made no sense. His goal was to reduce the injuries that accidents caused. In particular, he did not believe in safety measures that depended on changing the behavior of the driver, since he considered the driver unreliable, hard to educate, and prone to error. Haddon believed the best safety measures were *passive*. "He was a gentle man," Moynihan recalls. "Quiet, without being mum. He never forgot that what we were talking about were children with their heads smashed and broken bodies and dead people."

Several years later, Moynihan was working for President Johnson in the Department of Labor, and hired a young lawyer out of Harvard named Ralph Nader to work on traffic-safety issues. Nader, too, was a devotee of Haddon's ideas, and he converted a young congressional aide named Joan Claybrook. In 1959, Moynihan wrote an enormously influential article, articulating Haddon's principles, called "Epidemic on the Highways." In 1965, Nader wrote his own homage to the Haddon philosophy, "Unsafe at Any Speed," which became a best-seller, and in 1966 the Haddon crusade swept Washington. In the House and the Senate, there were packed hearings on legislation to create a federal regulatory agency for traffic safety. Moynihan and Haddon testified, as did a liability lawyer from South Carolina, in white shoes and a white suit, and a Teamsters official, Jimmy Hoffa, whom Claybrook remembers as a "fabulous" witness. It used to be that, during a frontal crash, steering columns in cars were pushed back through the passenger compartment, potentially impaling the driver. The advocates argued that columns should collapse inward on impact. Instrument panels ought to be padded, they said, and knobs shouldn't stick out, where they might cause injury. Doors ought to have strengthened side-impact beams. Roofs should be strong enough to withstand a rollover. Seats should have head restraints to protect against neck injuries. Windshields ought to be glazed, so that if you hit them with your head at high speed your face wasn't cut to ribbons. The bill sailed through both houses of Congress, and a regulatory body, which eventually became the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, was established. Haddon was made its commissioner, Claybrook his special assistant. "I remember a Senate hearing we had with Warren Magnuson," Nader recalls. "He was listening to a pediatrician who was one of our allies, Seymour Charles, from New Jersey, and Charles was showing how there were two cars that collided, and one had a collapsible steering column and one didn't, and one driver walked away, the other was killed. And, just like that, Magnuson caught on. 'You mean,' he said, 'you can have had a crash without an injury?' That's it! A crash without an injury. That idea was very powerful."

"But when Mel Brooks makes fun of everything and everybody the critics cheer!"

There is no question that the improvements in auto design which Haddon and his disciples pushed for saved countless lives. They changed the way cars were built, and put safety on the national agenda. What they did not do, however, is make American highways the safest in the world. In fact—and this is the puzzling thing about the Haddon crusade—the opposite happened. United States auto-fatality rates were the lowest in the world *before* Haddon came along. But, since the late nineteen-seventies, just as the original set of N.H.T.S.A. safety standards were having their biggest impact, America's safety record has fallen to eleventh place. According to calculations by Leonard Evans, a longtime General Motors researcher and one of the world's leading experts on traffic safety, if American traffic fatalities had declined at the same rate as Canada's or Australia's between 1979 and 1997, there would have been somewhere in the vicinity of a hundred and sixty thousand fewer traffic deaths in that span.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Haddon's crusade is responsible for a hundred and sixty thousand highway deaths. Traffic safety is the most complex of phenomena—fatality rates can be measured in many ways, and reflect a hundred different variables—and in this period there were numerous factors that distinguished the United States from places like Canada and Australia, including different trends in drunk driving. Nor is it to say that the Haddonites had anything but the highest motives. Still, Evans's figures raise a number of troubling questions. Haddon and Nader and Claybrook told us, after all, that the best way to combat the epidemic on the highways was to shift attention from the driver to the vehicle. No other country pursued the passive strategy as vigorously, and no other country had such high expectations for its success. But America's slipping record on auto safety suggests that somewhere in the logic of that approach there was a mistake. And, if so, it necessarily changes the way we

"I want to use our tax savings to buy a pair of boot-cut trousers."

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think about car crashes like the one that happened seven years ago on the corner of Fleming Pike and Egg Harbor Road.

"I think that the philosophical argument behind the passive approach is a strong one," Evans says. A physicist by training, he is a compact, spry man in his sixties, with a trace in his voice of his native Northern Ireland. On the walls of his office in suburban Detroit is a lifetime of awards and certifications from safety researchers, but, like many technical types, he is embittered by how hard it has been to make his voice heard in the safety debates of the past thirty years. "Either you can persuade people to boil their own water because there is a typhoid epidemic or you can put chlorine in the water," he went on. "And the second, passive solution is obviously preferred to the first, because there is no way you can persuade everyone to act in a prudent way. But starting from that philosophical principle and then ignoring reality is a recipe for disaster. And that's what happened. Why?" Here Evans nearly leaped out of his chair. "*Because there isn't any chlorine for traffic crashes.*"

III. THE FIRST COLLISION

Robert Day's crash was not the accident of a young man. He was hit from the side, and adolescents and young adults usually have side-impact crashes when their cars slide off the road into a fixed object like a tree, often at reckless speeds. Older people tend to have side-impact crashes at normal speeds, in intersections, and as the result of error, not negligence. In fact, Day's crash was not merely typical in form; it was the result of a common type of driver error. He didn't see something he was supposed to see.

His mistake is, on one level, difficult to understand. There was a sign, clearly visible from the roadway, telling him of an intersection ahead, and then another, in bright red, telling him to stop. How could he have missed them both? From what we know of human perception, though, this kind of mistake happens all the time. Imagine, for instance, that you were asked to look at the shape of a cross, briefly displayed on a computer screen, and report on which arm of the cross was longer. After you did this a few times, another object, like a word or a small colored square—what psychologists call a critical stimulus—flashes next to the cross on the screen, right in front of your eyes. Would you see the critical stimulus? Most of us would say yes. Intuitively, we believe that we "see" everything in our field of vision—particularly things right in front of us—and that the difference between the things we pay attention to and the things we don't is simply that the things we focus on are the things we become aware of. But when experiments to test this assumption were conducted recently by Arien Mack, a psychologist at the New School, in New York, she found, to her surprise, that a significant portion of her observers didn't see the second object at all: it was directly in their field of vision, and yet, because their attention was focussed on the cross, they were oblivious of it. Mack calls this phenomenon "inattentional blindness."

Daniel Simons, a professor of psychology at Harvard, has done a more dramatic set of experiments, following on the same idea. He and a colleague, Christopher Chabris, recently made a video of two teams of basketball players, one team in white shirts and the other in black, each player in constant motion as two basketballs are passed back and forth. Observers were asked to count the number of passes completed by the members of the white team. After about forty-five seconds of passes, a woman in a gorilla suit walks into the middle of the group, stands in front of the camera, beats her chest vigorously, and then walks away. "Fifty per cent of the people missed the gorilla," Simons says. "We got the most striking reactions. We'd ask people, 'Did you see anyone walking across the screen?' They'd say no. Anything at all? No. Eventually, we'd ask them, 'Did you notice the gorilla?' And they'd say, 'The *what*?' " Simons's experiment is one of those psychological studies which are impossible to believe in the abstract: if you look at the video (called "Gorillas in Our Midst") when you know what's coming, the woman in the gorilla suit is inescapable. How could anyone miss that? But people do. In recent years, there has been much scientific research on the fallibility of memory—on the fact that eyewitnesses, for example, often distort or omit critical details when they recall what they saw. But the new research points to something that is even more troubling: it isn't just that our memory of what we see is selective; it's that seeing itself is selective.

This is a common problem in driving. Talking on a cell phone and trying to drive, for instance, is not unlike trying to count passes in a basketball game and simultaneously keep track of wandering animals. "When you get into a phone conversation, it's different from the normal way we have evolved to interact," David Strayer, a professor of psychology at the University of Utah, says. "Normally, conversation is face to face. There are all kinds of cues. But when you are on the phone you strip that away. It's virtual reality. You attend to that virtual reality, and shut down processing of the here and now." Strayer has done tests of people who were driving and talking on phones, and found that they remember far fewer things than those driving without phones. Their field of view shrinks. In one experiment, he flashed red and green lights at people while they were driving, and those on the phone missed twice as many lights as the others, and responded far more slowly to those lights they did see. "We tend to find the biggest deficits in unexpected events, a child darting onto the road, a light changing," Strayer says. "Someone going into your lane. That's what you *don't* see. There is a part of driving that is automatic and routine. There is a second part of driving that is completely unpredictable, and that is the part that requires attention." This is what Simons found with his gorilla, and it is the scariest part of inattentional blindness. People allow themselves to be distracted while driving because they think that they will still be able to pay attention to anomalies. But it is precisely those anomalous things, those deviations from the expected script, which they won't see.

Marc Green, a psychologist with an accident-consulting firm in Toronto, once worked on a case where a woman hit a bicyclist with her car. "She was pulling into a gas station," Green says. "It was five o'clock in the morning. She'd done that almost every day for a year. She looks to the left, and then she hears a thud. There's a bicyclist on the ground. She'd looked down that sidewalk nearly every day for a year and never seen anybody. She adaptively learned to ignore what was on that sidewalk because it was useless information. She may actually have turned her eyes toward him and failed to see him." Green says that, once you understand why the woman failed to see the bicyclist, the crash comes to seem almost inevitable.

It's the same conclusion that Haddon reached, and that formed the basis for his conviction that Americans were spending too much time worrying about what happened before an accident and not enough time worrying about what happened during and after an accident. Sometimes crashes happen because people do stupid things that they shouldn't have done—like drink or speed or talk on their cell phone. But sometimes people do stupid things that they *cannot* help, and it makes no sense to construct a safety program that does not recognize human fallibility. Just imagine, for example, that you're driving down a country road. The radio is playing. You're talking to your son, next to you. There is a highway crossing up ahead, but you can't see it, nor can you see any cars on the roadway, because of a stand of trees on both sides of the road. Maybe you look away from the road, for a moment, to change the dial on the radio, or something catches your eye outside, and when you glance back it happens to be at the very moment when a trick of geography makes it look as if your road stretched without interruption well off into the distance. Suddenly, up ahead, right in front of your eyes looms a bright-red anomalous stop sign—as out of place in the momentary mental universe that you have constructed for yourself as a gorilla in a basketball game—and, precisely because it is so anomalous, it doesn't register. Then—*bang!* How do you prevent an accident like that?

IV. THE SECOND COLLISION

One day in 1968, a group of engineers from the Cleveland-based auto-parts manufacturer Eaton, Yale & Towne went to Washington, D.C., to see William Haddon. They carried with them a secret prototype of what they called the People Saver. It was a nylon air cushion that inflated on impact, and the instant Haddon saw it he was smitten. "Oh, he was ecstatic, just ecstatic," Claybrook recalls. "I think it was one of the most exciting moments of his life."

The air bag had been invented in the early fifties by a man named John Hetrick, who became convinced, after running his car into a ditch, that drivers and passengers would be much safer if they could be protected by some kind of air cushion. But how could one inflate it in the first few milliseconds of a crash? As he pondered the problem, Hetrick remembered a freak accident that had happened during the war, when he was in the Navy working in a torpedo-maintenance shop. Torpedos carry a charge of compressed air, and one day a torpedo covered in canvas accidentally released its charge. All at once, Hetrick recalled years later, the canvas "shot up into the air, quicker than you could blink an eye." Thus was the idea for the air bag born.

In its earliest incarnation, the air bag was a crude device; one preliminary test inadvertently killed a baboon, and there were widespread worries about the safety of detonating what was essentially a small bomb inside a car. (Indeed, as a result of numerous injuries to children and small adults, air bags have now been substantially depowered.) But to Haddon the People Saver was the embodiment of everything he believed in—it was the chlorine in the water, and it solved a problem that had been vexing him for years. The Haddonites had always insisted that what was generally called a crash was actually two separate events. The first collision was the initial contact between two automobiles, and in order to prevent the dangerous intrusion of one car into the passenger compartment of another, they argued, cars ought to be built with a protective metal cage around the front and back seats. The second collision, though, was even more important. That was the collision between the occupants of a car and the inside of their own vehicle. If the driver and his passengers were to survive the abrupt impact of a crash, they needed a second safety system, which carefully and gradually decelerated their bodies. The logical choice for that task was seat belts, but Haddon, with his background in public health, didn't trust safety measures that depended on an individual's active co-operation. "The biggest problem we had back then was that only about twelve per cent of the public used seat belts," Claybrook says. "They were terribly designed, and people didn't use them." With the air bag, there was no decision to make. The Haddonites called it a "technological vaccine," and attacked its doubters in Detroit for showing "an absence of moral and ethical leadership." The air bag, they vowed, was going to replace the seat belt. In "Unsafe at Any Speed," Nader wrote:

> The seat belt should have been introduced in the twenties and rendered obsolete by the early fifties, for it is only the first step toward a more rational passenger restraint system which modern technology could develop and perfect for mass production. Such a system ideally would not rely on the active participation of the passenger to take effect; it would be the superior *passive* safety design which would come into use only when needed, and without active participation of the occupant. . . . Protection like this could be achieved by a kind of inflatable air bag restraint which would be actuated to envelop a passenger before a crash.

For the next twenty years, Haddon, Nader, and Claybrook were consumed by the battle to force a reluctant Detroit to make the air bag mandatory equipment. There were lawsuits, and heated debates, and bureaucratic infighting. The automakers, mindful of cost and other concerns, argued that the emphasis ought to be on seat belts. But, to the Haddonites, Detroit was hopelessly in the grip of the old paradigm on auto safety. His opponents, Haddon wrote, with typical hauteur, were like "Malinowski's natives in their approaches to the hazards out the reef which they did not understand." Their attitudes were "redolent of the extranatural, supernatural and the pre-scientific." In 1991, the Haddonites won. That year, a law was passed requiring air bags in every new car by the end of the decade. It sounded like a great victory. But was it?

V. HADDON'S MISTAKE

When Stephen Capoferri's Aerostar hit Robert Day's Jeep Wagoneer, Capoferri's seat belt lay loose across his hips and chest. His shoulder belt probably had about two inches of slack. At

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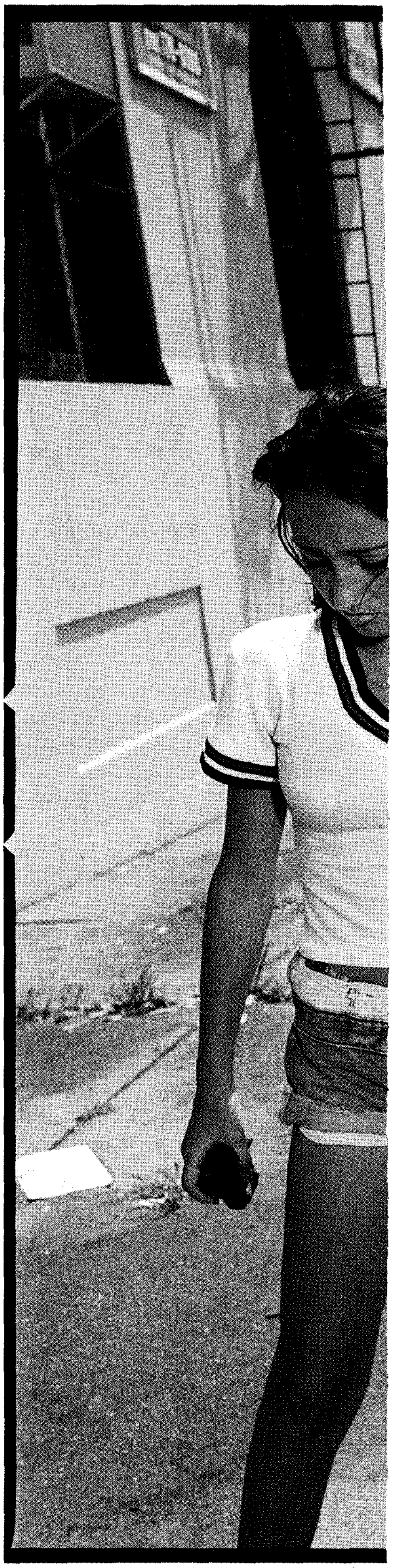
SHOWCASE

AMERICAN BEAUTY



Mary Ellen Mark photographed these teen-agers one summer day a few years ago, at the Brighton Beach end of Coney Island, because she found them "seductive—innocent but not innocent." Like Tiny, the fourteen-year-old prostitute in Seattle who is the subject of one of Mark's most famous images, the two girls on the right confront the camera head on, almost defiantly. They seem convinced of their attractiveness, and not bothered by the anomalous juxtaposition of their natural beauty with the broken sidewalk and graffiti, the skimpy bra tops and cutoff jeans. Aplomb, or a brave attempt at it, in an impoverished landscape is one of the themes of "Mary Ellen Mark: American Odyssey," a retrospective of the photographer's work from 1963 to 1999 that is now at the uptown branch of the International Center of Photography. (It is the final show at that location, which is about to become a grand private house again.) Mark is following Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and Diane Arbus, who also made odysseys through America. They found poor but noble farmers, melancholy waitresses in diners, and various freaks. Mark finds the inmates of a mental institution, transvestites, a club of obese women, white supremacists, children with guns, and drug-addicted parents. This is, as she writes in an Afterword to the show's catalogue, "grim" subject matter, "on the edge of or outside the mainstream of our culture," but the best of the work—for instance, the sad sequence of pictures of Tiny's family in Seattle, taken over a period of years—is leavened with an un-Arbus-like compassion. Last month, Mark received I.C.P.'s second annual Cornell Capa Award for distinguished achievement. The first one went to Robert Frank.

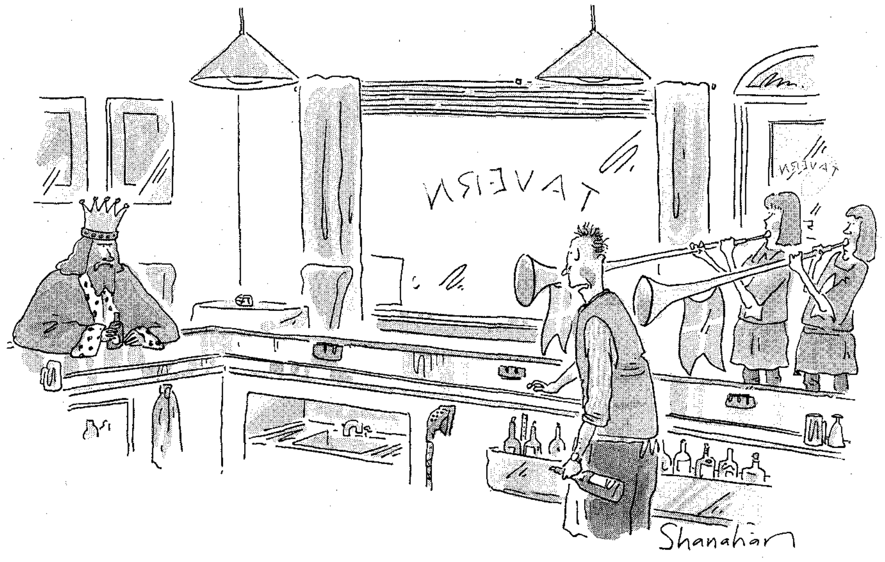
—*Sharon DeLano*

impact, his car decelerated, but Capoferri's body kept moving forward, and within thirty milliseconds the slack in his seat belts was gone. In the language of engineers, he "loaded" his restraints. Under the force of Capoferri's onrushing weight, his belts began to stretch—the fabric giving by as much as six inches. As his shoulder belt grew taut, it dug into his chest, compressing it by another two inches, and if you had seen Capoferri at the moment of maximum forward trajectory his shoulder belt around his chest would have looked like a rubber band around a balloon. Simultaneously, within those first few milliseconds, his air bag exploded and rose to meet him at more than a hundred miles per hour. Forty to fifty milliseconds after impact, it had enveloped his face, neck, and upper chest. A fraction of a second later, the bag deflated. Capoferri was thrown back against his seat. Total time elapsed: one hundred milliseconds.

Would Capoferri have lived without an air bag? Probably. He would have stretched his seat belt so far that his head would have hit the steering wheel. But his belts would have slowed him down enough that he might only have broken his nose or cut his forehead or suffered a mild concussion. The other way around, however, with an air bag but not a seat belt, his fate would have been much more uncertain. In the absence of seat belts, air bags work best when one car hits another squarely, so that the driver pitches forward directly into the path of the oncoming bag. But Capoferri hit Day at a slight angle. The front-passenger side of the Aerostar sustained more damage than the driver's side, which means that without his belts holding him in place he would have been thrown away from the air bag off to the side, toward the rearview mirror or perhaps even the front-passenger "A" pillar. Capoferri's air bag protected him only because he was wearing his seat belt. Car-crash statistics show this to be the rule. Wearing a seat belt cuts your chances of dying in an accident by forty-three per cent. If you add the protection of an air bag, your fatality risk is cut by forty-seven per cent. But an air bag by itself reduces the risk of dying in an accident by just thirteen per cent.

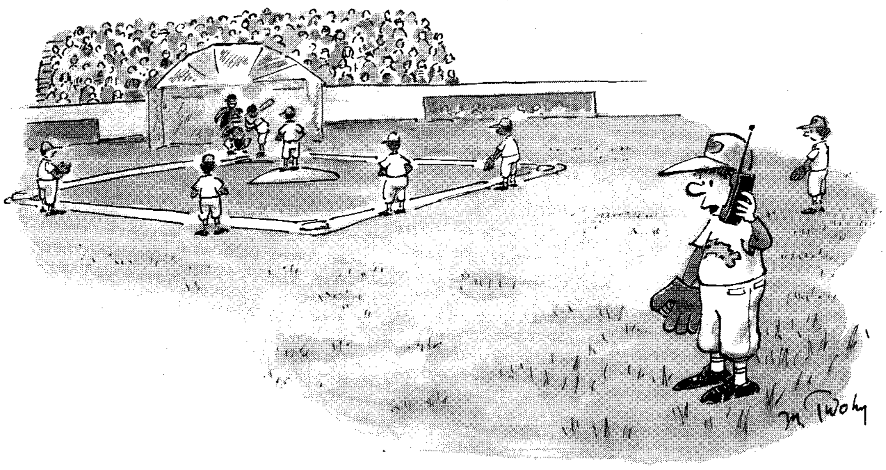
That the effectiveness of an air bag depended on the use of a seat belt was a concept that the Haddonites, in those early days, never properly understood. They wanted the air bag to replace the seat belt when in fact it was capable only of supplementing it, and they clung to that belief, even in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary. Don Huelke, a longtime safety researcher at the University of Michigan, remembers being on an N.H.T.S.A. advisory committee in the early nineteen-seventies, when people at the agency were trying to come up with statistics for the public on the value of air bags. "Their estimates were that something like twenty-eight thousand people a year could be saved by the air bags," he recalls, "and then someone pointed out to them that there weren't that many driver fatalities in frontal crashes in a year. It was kind of like 'Oops.' So the estimates were reduced." In 1977, Claybrook became the head of N.H.T.S.A. and renewed the push for air bags. The agency's estimate now was that air bags would cut a driver's risk of dying in a crash by forty per cent—a more modest but still implausible figure. "In 1973, there was a study in the open literature, performed at G.M., that estimated that the air bag would reduce the fatality risk to an unbelted driver by eighteen per cent," Leonard Evans says. "N.H.T.S.A. had this information and dismissed it. Why? Because it was from the automobile industry."

The truth is that even today it is seat belts, not air bags, that are providing the most important new safety advances. Had Capoferri been driving a late-model Ford minivan, for example, his seat belt would have had what is called a pretensioner: a tiny explosive device that would have taken the slack out of the belt just after the moment of impact. Without the pretensioner, Stephen Kozak, an engineer at Ford, explains, "you start to accelerate before you hit the belt. You get the clothesline effect." With it, Capoferri's deceleration would have been a bit more gradual. At the same time, belts are now being designed which cut down on chest compression. Capoferri's chest wall was pushed in two inches, and had he been a much older man, with less resilient bones and cartilage, that two-inch compression might have been enough to fracture three or four ribs. So belts now "pay out" extra webbing after a certain point: as Capoferri stretched forward, his belt would have been lengthened by several inches, relieving the pressure on his chest. The next stage in seat-belt design is probably to offer car buyers the option of what is called a four-point belt—two shoulder belts that run down the chest, like suspenders attached to a lap belt. Ford showed a four-point prototype at the auto shows this spring, and early estimates are that it might cut fatality risk by another ten per cent—which would make seat belts roughly five times more effective in saving lives than air bags by themselves. "The best solution is to provide automatic protection, including air bags, as baseline protection for everyone, with seat belts as a supplement for those



"It's for you."

who will use them," Haddon wrote in 1984. In putting air bags first and seat belts second, he had things backward.



"I am standing up straight!"

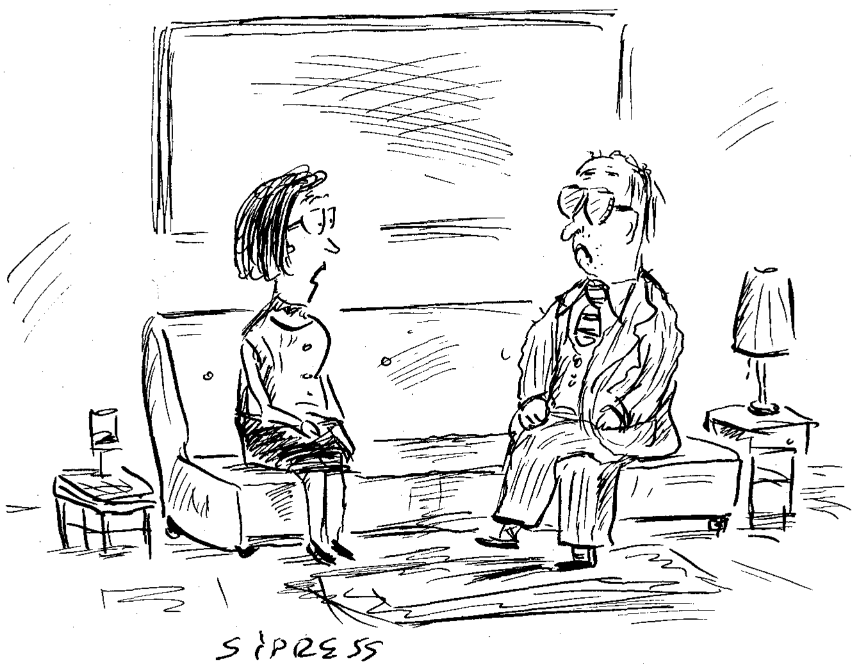
Robert Day suffered a very different kind of accident from Stephen Capoferri's: he was hit from the side, and the physics of a side-impact crash are not nearly so forgiving. Imagine, for instance, that you punched a brick wall as hard as you could. If your fist was bare, you'd break your hand. If you had a glove with two inches of padding, your hand would sting. If you had a glove with six inches of padding, you might not feel much of anything. The more energy-absorbing material—the more space—you can put between your body and the wall, the better off you are. An automobile accident is no different. Capoferri lived, in part, because he had lots of space between himself and Day's Wagoneer. Cars have steel rails connecting the passenger compartment with the bumper, and each of those rails is engineered with what are called convolutions—accordion-like folds designed to absorb, slowly and evenly, the impact of a collision. Capoferri's van was engineered with twenty-seven inches of crumple room, and at the speed he was travelling he probably used about twenty-one inches of that. But Day had four inches, no more, between his body and the door, and perhaps another five to six inches in the door itself. Capoferri hit the wall with a boxing glove. Day punched it with his bare hand.

Day's problems were compounded by the fact that he was not wearing his seat belt. The right-front fender of Capoferri's Aerostar struck his Wagoneer squarely on the driver's door, pushing the Jeep sidewise, and if Day had been belted he would have moved with his vehicle, away from the onrushing Aerostar. But he wasn't, and so the Jeep moved out from under him: within fifteen milliseconds, the four inches of space between his body and the side of the Jeep was gone. The impact of the Aerostar slammed the driver's door against his ribs and spleen.

Day could easily have been ejected from his vehicle at that point. The impact of Capoferri's van shattered the glass in Day's door, and a Wagoneer, like most sports-utility vehicles, has a low belt line—meaning that the side windows are so large that with the glass gone there's a hole big enough for an unrestrained body to fly through. This is what it means to be "thrown clear" of a crash, although when that phrase is used in the popular literature it is sometimes said as if it were a good thing, when of course to be "thrown clear" of a crash is merely to be thrown into some other hard and even more lethal object, like the pavement or a tree or another car. Day, for whatever reason, was not thrown clear, and in that narrow sense he was lucky. This advantage, however, amounted to little. Day's door was driven into him like a sledgehammer.

Would a front air bag have saved Robert Day? Not at all. He wasn't moving forward into the steering wheel. He was moving sidewise into the door. Some cars now have additional air bags that are intended to protect the head as it hits the top of the door frame in a side-impact crash. But Day didn't die of head injuries. He died of abdominal injuries. Conceivably, a side-impact bag might have offered his abdomen some slight protection. But Day's best chance of surviving the accident would have been to wear his seat belt. It would have held him in place in those first few milliseconds of impact. It would have preserved some part of the space separating him from the door, diminishing the impact of the Aerostar. Day made two mistakes that morning, then, the second of which was not buckling up. But this is a point on which the Haddonites were in error as well, because the companion to their obsession with air bags was the equally false belief that encouraging drivers to wear their seat belts was a largely futile endeavor.

In the early nineteen-seventies, just at the moment when Haddon and Claybrook were pushing hardest for air bags, the Australian state of Victoria passed the world's first mandatory seat-belt legislation, and the law was an immediate success. With an aggressive public-education campaign, rates of seat-belt use jumped from twenty to eighty per cent. During the next several years, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, France, and others followed suit. But a similar movement in the United States in the early seventies stalled. James Gregory, who headed the N.H.T.S.A. during the Ford years, says that if Nader had advocated mandatory belt laws they might have carried the day. But Nader, then at the height of his fame and influence, didn't think that belt laws would work in this country. "You push mandatory belts, you might get a very adverse reaction," Nader says today of his thinking back then. "Mindless reaction. And how many tickets do you give out a day? What about back seats? At what point do you require a seat belt for small kids? And it's administratively difficult when people cross state lines. That's why I always focussed on the passive. We have a libertarian streak that Europe doesn't have." Richard Peet, a congressional staffer who helped draft legislation in Congress giving states financial incentives to pass belt laws, founded an organization in the early seventies to promote belt-wearing. "After I did that, some of the people who worked for Nader's organization went



"I want to start dating other zhlubs."

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after me, saying that I was selling out the air-bag movement," Peet recalls. "That pissed me off. I thought the safety movement was the safety movement and we were all working together for common aims." In "Auto Safety," a history of auto-safety regulation, John Graham, of the Harvard School of Public Health, writes of Claybrook's time at the N.H.T.S.A.:

> Her lack of aggressive leadership on safety belt use was a major source of irritation among belt use advocates, auto industry officials, and officials from state safety programs. They saw her pessimistic attitudes as a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of Claybrook's aides at N.H.T.S.A. who worked with state agencies acknowledged: "It is fair to say that Claybrook never made a dedicated effort to get mandatory belt-use laws." Another aide offered the following explanation of her philosophy: "Joan didn't do much on mandatory belt use because her primary interests were in vehicle regulation. She was fond of saying 'it is easier to get twenty auto companies to do something than to get 200 million Americans to do something.' "

Claybrook says that while at the N.H.T.S.A. she mailed a letter to all the state governors encouraging them to pass mandatory seat-belt legislation, and "not one governor would help us." It is clear that she had low expectations for her efforts. Even as late as 1984, Claybrook was still insisting that trying to encourage seat-belt use was a fool's errand. "It is not likely that mandatory seat belt usage laws will be either enacted or found acceptable to the public in large numbers," Claybrook wrote. "There is massive public resistance to adult safety belt usage." In the very year her words were published, however, a coalition of medical groups finally managed to pass the country's first mandatory seat-belt law, in New York, and the results were dramatic. One state after another soon did likewise, and public opinion about belts underwent what the pollster Gary Lawrence has called "one of the most phenomenal shifts in attitudes ever measured." Americans, it turned out, did not have a cultural aversion to seat belts. They just needed some encouragement. "It's not a big Freudian thing whether you buckle up or not," says B. J. Campbell, a former safety researcher at the University of North Carolina, who was one of the veterans of the seat-belt movement. "It's just a habit, and either you're in the habit of doing it or you're not."

Today, belt-wearing rates in the United States are just over seventy per cent, and every year they inch up a little more. But if the seat-belt campaign had begun in the nineteen-seventies, instead of the nineteen-eighties, the use rate in this country would be higher right now, and in the intervening years an awful lot of car accidents might have turned out differently, including one at the intersection of Egg Harbor Road and Fleming Pike.

VI. CRASH TEST

William Haddon died in 1985, of kidney disease, at the age of fifty-eight. From the time he left government until his death, he headed an influential research group called the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Joan Claybrook left the N.H.T.S.A. in 1980 and went on to run Ralph Nader's advocacy group Public Citizen, where she has been a powerful voice on auto safety ever since. In an interview this spring, Claybrook listed the things that she would do if she were back as the country's traffic-safety czar. "I'd issue a rollover standard, and have a thirty-miles-per-hour test for air bags," she said. "Upgrade the seating structure. Integrate the head restraint better. Upgrade the tire-safety standard. Provide much more consumer information. And also do more crash testing, whether it's rollover or off-set crash testing and rear-crash testing." The most effective way to reduce automobile fatalities, she went on, would be to focus on rollovers—lowering the center of gravity in S.U.V.s, strengthening doors and roofs. In the course of outlining her agenda, Claybrook did not once mention the words "seat belt."

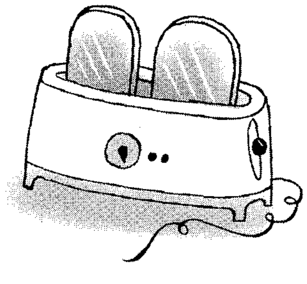
Ralph Nader, for his part, spends a great deal of time speaking at college campuses about political activism. He remains a distinctive figure, tall and slightly stooped, with a bundle of papers under his arm. His interests have widened in recent years, but he is still passionate about his first crusade. "Haddon was all business—never made a joke, didn't tolerate fools easily," Nader said not long ago, when he was asked about the early days. He has a deep, rumbling press-conference voice, and speaks in sentence fragments, punctuated with long pauses. "Very dedicated. He influenced us all." The auto-safety campaign, he went on, "was a spectacular success of the federal-government mission. When the regulations were allowed, they worked. And it worked because it deals with technology rather than human behavior." Nader had just been speaking in Detroit, at Wayne State University, and was on the plane back to Washington, D.C. He was folded into his seat, his knees butting up against the tray table in front of him, and from time to time he looked enviously over at the people stretching their legs in the exit row. Did he have any regrets? Yes, he said. He wished that back in 1966 he had succeeded in keeping the criminal-penalties provision in the auto-safety bill that Congress passed that summer. "That would have gone right to the executive suite," he said.

There were things, he admitted, that had puzzled him over the years. He couldn't believe the strides that had been made against drunk driving. "You've got to hand it to MADD. It took me by surprise. The drunk-driving culture is deeply embedded. I thought it was too ingrained." And then there was what had happened with seat belts. "Use rates are up sharply," he said. "They're a lot higher than I thought they would be. I thought it would be very hard to hit fifty per cent. The most unlikely people now buckle up." He shook his head, marvelling. He had always been a belt user, and recommends belts to others, but who knew they would catch on?

Other safety activists, who had seen what had happened to driver behavior in Europe and Australia in the seventies, weren't so surprised, of course. But Nader was never the kind of activist who had great faith in the people whose lives he was trying to protect. He and the other Haddonites were sworn to a theory that said that the way to prevent typhoid is to chlorinate the water, even though there are clearly instances where chlorine will not do the trick. This is the blindness of ideology. It is what happens when public policy is conducted by those who cannot conceive that human beings will do willingly what is in their own interest. What was the truly poignant thing about Robert Day, after all? Not just that he was a click away from saving his only life but that his son, sitting right next to him, *was* wearing his seat belt. In the Days' Jeep Wagoneer, a fight that experts assumed was futile was already half won.

One day this spring, a team of engineers at Ford conducted a crash test on a 2003 Mercury. This was at Ford's test facility in Dearborn, a long, rectangular white steel structure, bisected by a five-hundred-and-fifty-foot runway. Ford crashes as many as two cars a day there, ramming them with specially designed sleds or dragging them down the runway with a cable into a twenty-foot cube of concrete. Along the side of the track were the twisted hulks of previous experiments: a Ford Focus wagon up on blocks; a mangled BMW S.U.V. that had been crashed, out of competitive curiosity, the previous week; a Ford Explorer that looked as though it had been thrown into a blender. In a room at the back, there were fifty or sixty crash-test dummies, propped up on tables and chairs, in a dozen or more configurations—some in Converse sneakers, some in patent-leather shoes, some without feet and legs at all, each one covered with multiple electronic sensors, all designed to measure the kinds of injuries possible in a crash.

The severity of any accident is measured not by the speed of the car at the moment of impact but by what is known as the delta V—the difference between how fast a car is going at the moment of impact and how fast it is moving after the accident. Capoferri's delta V was about twenty-five miles per hour, seven miles per hour higher than the accident average. The delta V of the Mercury test, though, was to be thirty-five miles per hour, which is the equivalent of hitting an identical parked car at seventy miles per hour. The occupants were two adult-size dummies in orange shorts. Their faces were covered in wet paint, red above the upper jaw and blue below it, to mark where their faces hit on the air bag. The back seat carried a full cargo of computers and video cameras. A series of yellow lights began flashing. An engineer stood to the side, holding an abort button. Then a bank of stage lights came on, directly above the point of impact. Sixteen video cameras began rolling. A voice came over a loudspeaker, counting down: five, four, three . . . There was a blur as the Mercury swept by—then *bang*, as the car hit the barrier and the dual front air bags exploded. A plastic light bracket skittered across the floor, and the long warehouse was suddenly still.



It was a moment of extraordinary violence, yet it was also strangely compelling. This was performance art, an abstract and ritualized rendering of reality, given in a concrete-and-steel gallery. The front end of the Mercury was perfectly compressed; the car was thirty inches shorter than it had been a moment before. The windshield was untouched. The "A" pillars and roofline were intact. The passenger cabin was whole. In the dead center of the deflated air bags, right where they were supposed to be, were perfect blue-and-red paint imprints of the dummies' faces.

But it was only a performance, and that was the hard thing to remember. In the real world, people rarely have perfectly square frontal collisions, sitting ramrod straight and ideally positioned; people rarely have accidents that so perfectly showcase the minor talents of the air bag. A crash test is beautiful. In the sequence we have all seen over and over in automobile commercials, the dummy rises magically to meet the swelling cushion, always in slow motion, the bang replaced by Mozart, and on those theatrical terms the dowdy fabric strips of the seat belt cannot compete with the billowing folds of the air bag. This is the image that seduced William Haddon when the men from Eaton, Yale showed him the People Saver so many years ago, and the image that warped auto safety for twenty long years. But real accidents are seldom like this. They are ugly and complicated, shaped by the messy geometries of the everyday world and by the infinite variety of human frailty. A man looks away from the road at the wrong time. He does not see what he ought to see. Another man does not have time to react. The two cars collide, but at a slight angle. There is a two-hundred-and-seventy-degree spin. There is skidding and banging. A belt presses deep into one man's chest—and that saves his life. The other man's unrestrained body smashes against the car door—and that kills him.

"They left pretty early, about eight, nine in the morning," Susan Day, Robert Day's widow, recalls. "I was at home when the hospital called. I went to see my son first. He was pretty much O.K., had a lot of bruising. Then they came in and said, 'Your husband didn't make it.' " ♦

PROFILES

THE DEAN'S LIST

The enfant terrible of English lit grows up.

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

Stanley Fish is a loudmouth, a show-off, a mediocre tennis player, and a scourge of Western civilization as we know it. He likes to humiliate people in public for the fun of it and is, not surprisingly, widely loathed. He is greedy, neurotic, controlling, and short. He has appalling posture, and because he can't deal with tight belts his pants are always falling down in a way that does not suit a man of his age (he is sixty-three). His own wife has described him as a "slightly pudgy person, who sometimes looked cross-eyed and occasionally wore something that resembled a leisure suit." He is, in other words, a surpassingly delightful human being.

At present, Fish holds the position of dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago (U.I.C.). His assumption of the deanship at this obscure school, two and a half years ago, amazed almost everyone who knew him or knew who he was, because, until that time, being a scourge of Western civilization as we know it had provided him with a very good living. Before he moved to Chicago, Fish was the chairman of the notoriously radical English department at Duke, and had become famous for his disturbing views on literary interpretation and his attacks on liberalism. He wrote essays with titles like "There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing, Too." During the culture wars of the late eighties and early nineties, he was reviled as the grand wizard of political correctness—the man who hired Marxists and supported campus speech codes—and was held up as an example of everything that had gone terribly wrong with higher education. Before Fish became a public menace, he was a Miltonist, who, at the age of twenty-nine, while a professor at Berkeley, had published a book, "Surprised by Sin," that marked him as one of the foremost Milton scholars of the past hundred years. According to Michael Fried, an art historian, literary theorist, and poet, it was "an atom bomb of a book, the impact of which can scarcely be imagined today, in the way that no one could do anything in the visual arts right now that would have a tenth of the impact of Pollock." (This month, Fish published his first book on Milton in thirty-four years.) But, as the millennium waned, Fish grew restless. He had done the transformation-of-Milton-scholarship thing, he had done the scourge thing. It was time for something different.

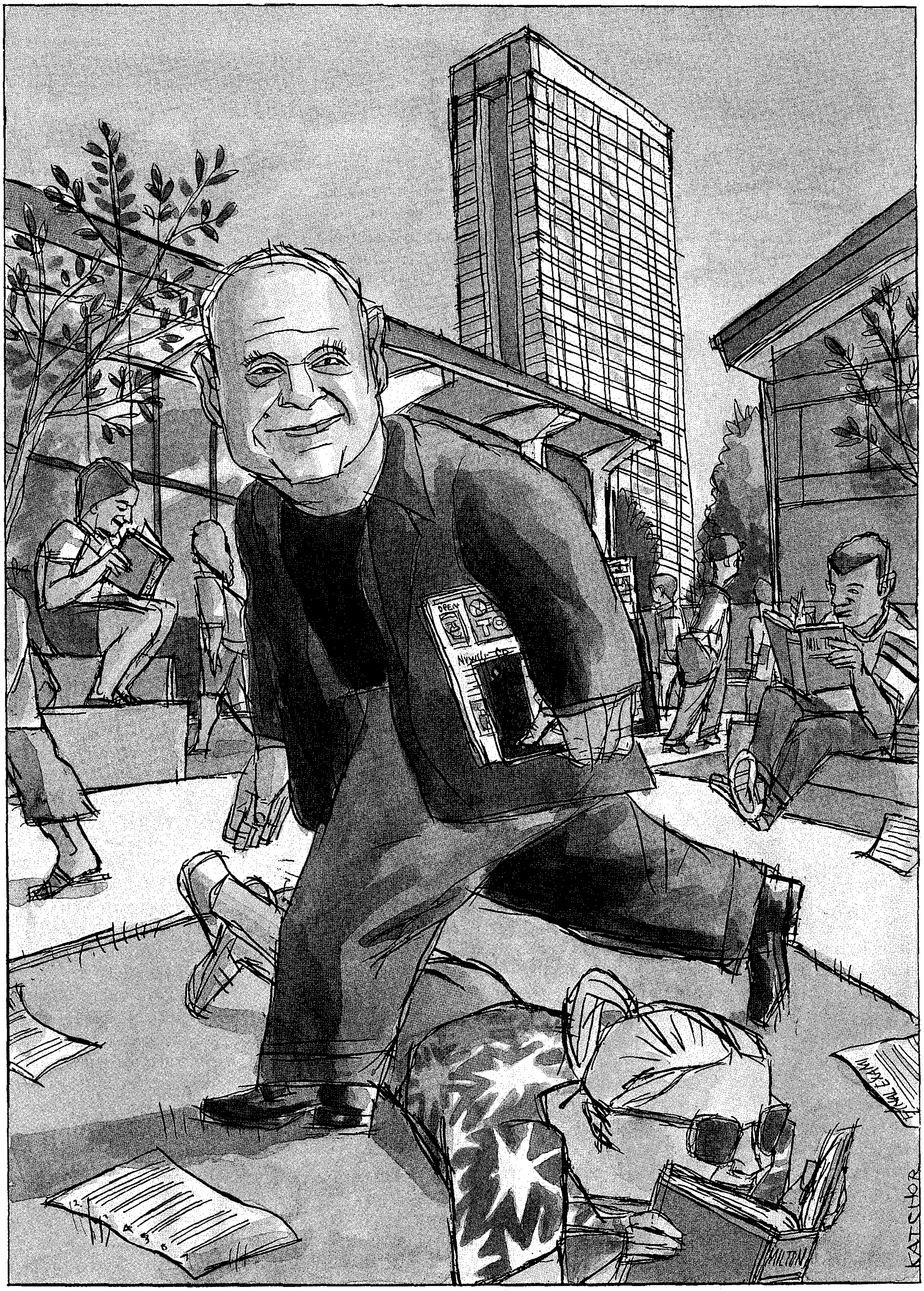
In some ways, when Fish took over, U.I.C. was doing just fine: it was a respectable regional university that served its local population and had several good departments. But Fish and the provost who hired him figured that U.I.C. could become a school that people talked about. After all, not only had Fish, in the eighties, transformed Duke's English department from one that maintained a fastidious distance from the second half of the twentieth century to a cynosure in the early-nineties debates over multiculturalism (most of the attention was unfavorable, admittedly, but Fish loves bad publicity even more than good); he also took the undistinguished Duke University Press and made it one of the most prominent university presses in the country. Since Fish arrived at U.I.C., he has hired a number of splashy names. The new "Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism" contains more articles by U.I.C. professors than by professors from any other single university. On campus, people have grown used to the jarring sight of Fish's British-racing-green Jaguar in the parking lot and the sound of his italicized squawks in the corridor. Over the past two years, Fish has diligently worked the faculty cafeteria, so that now when a diminutive figure appears in the doorway wearing a brown fedora and carrying a slice of pepperoni pizza, everybody knows what's coming. Some people think Fish is running the school into the ground, other people love him and think he's doing exactly what he's paid for, but everyone at U.I.C. agrees, with all the Chinese-curse ambivalence it implies, that life there has become a lot more interesting.

Fish is a man whose heart is gladdened by routine, and, Monday being his most structured day, it makes for a reassuring start to the week. At 9 A.M. on a recent Monday, seven people clustered at one end of a long table for the weekly deans' meeting. Fish, at the head of the table, crouched low over his coffee. He was wearing a long-sleeved black top of a pleasing softness, gray trousers, and a navy sports coat. In addition, he was wearing a gold chain bracelet, a lapis-and-gold ring on his right hand, a turquoise-and-silver ring on his left hand, and a U.I.C. pin on his lapel.

The first topic on the agenda was a literature professor whom Fish was anxious to lure to Chicago to head the Afro-American Studies department. The professor was ensconced in a comfortable job in a warmer and greener part of the country, and Fish was not sure that his usual line about the magical-mystery-tour aspect of moving to a frozen Midwestern city in order to teach in what had very recently been a third-rate university was having the effect he had hoped for.

"She seems to think Chicago is like New York, only smaller and friendlier," Steven Weaver, a senior associate dean, said. Weaver is in his middle years, blue-shirted and square-faced, and says everything with a twinkle in his eye, as though the world were crowded with amusing double meanings. The idea that Chicago was a smaller, friendlier New York was found, in fact, generally amusing, the sort of thing one could make a witty comment upon, and there was a pause during which everyone at the table seemed to be trying furiously to come

BEN KATCHOR


MILTON
FINAL EXAM
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Stanley Fish had done the transform-Milton-scholarship thing. He had done the scourge thing. It was time for something new.

up with one, but in the end nobody did.

"Did the husband show any interest in your wife's firm?" Fish asked. Weaver's wife, like the professor's husband, was a lawyer, and had been enlisted in the seduction process.

"No," Weaver said.

Fish proceeded through the departments in alphabetical order. He reported that Chemistry had just held an inconclusive vote for interim head, and everyone turned to Lawrence Poston, a senior associate dean, for a comment. Poston was wearing a vividly white shirt that made his mild, pear-shaped face look softly pink, like a peony.

"What's the difference between the candidates?" Bette Bottoms, an associate dean, asked.

"Yes, what's their philosophy?" Fish asked.

"I don't think it's a difference in philosophy," Poston said. "It's more personality. Chemistry, you might say." Poston began to giggle at his pun, but nobody joined him, so he cleared his throat and turned a little pinker.

There were a few other items of interest. Jewish Studies wanted to hire a lecturer who proposed to commute to Chicago from Budapest. Fish had heard about a donor who might be interested in funding a program in Mormon studies. He had also heard, from a former student, about a scholar whose specialty was Mormonism and homosexuality, and he had spent some gleeful moments speculating about what the reaction of the donor might be should such a professor be appointed.

The next day, Weaver stopped by Fish's office to tie up some loose threads. He brought news of a candidate for one of the science departments. "The letter says he's meticulous," Weaver said.

"Code word," Fish said, arching an eyebrow.

Weaver nodded. "A plodder."

Fish was still anxious about the Afro-American Studies candidate. He fiddled with a necklace of Mardi Gras beads someone on his staff had given him that morning.

"I haven't the slightest idea what's going on with her," he confessed. He couldn't figure it out: he had shown her the extra-de-luxe ten-ounce-Beluga Stanley Fish treatment—fancy hotels, fancy restaurants, even a cocktail party at his apartment—but, still, she had not succumbed. It was weird.

"Where are we going to end up when she turns us down?" Weaver asked. The Afro-American Studies program badly needed a head, and there was no one else in sight.

"I could appoint Walter," Fish said, deadpan. Weaver laughed out loud. Walter was Walter Benn Michaels, a well-known Americanist, an old friend of Fish's, and a middle-aged white guy whose recent hiring in the English department had been the occasion for several months of bitter fighting, chiefly because some members of the department felt that his work, which deals with race as a concept, was insufficiently interested in the feelings of minorities. Michaels himself, it turned out when he visited the campus, was not the sort to muster up a warm and fuzzy persona for the purposes of making friends with his future colleagues, and had done little to allay their anxiety. "My work is not interested in the feelings of anybody," he said, by way of explanation.

The U.I.C. campus, near downtown Chicago, was built in 1965, and its buildings—stalwart brutalist grunts, heaved into fearsome shapes, out of concrete so aggressively unrefined as to be almost titillating—retain their original mood. The fortresslike administration building, twenty-eight stories high, dominates the campus from the center of a bleak plaza that is scoured by tornado-like winds from several directions. A supplicant approaching Fish's office on the nineteenth floor must set out on a painful odyssey across this plaza, slapped and sliced by the wind—is this the reason that Fish likes the building so much?

Fish is partial to brutalism, but he has taken a few steps toward making the campus less austere. One of the largest projects he has embarked upon is the building of a "spiffy" faculty dining facility, with good food and outdoor seating. At present, professors eat lunch in a dismal cafeteria with dismal food, next to the undergraduates. He wouldn't be surprised, however, if this project met with resistance. The trouble is, it's not just the architecture of the campus that is sixties in mood. For decades, U.I.C. has suffered from money woes and a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the university's downstate campus, at Urbana, and some members of the faculty have adapted to this situation by espousing a kind of hangdog puritanism, so that low salaries feel like left-wing sacrifice.

Fish hated the sixties. He was teaching at Berkeley during the student revolts, and says he was one of only two faculty members in his department to refuse to cancel classes for the strikes. As for hangdog lefty puritanism, Fish has written what amounts to a lyric poem on the subject:

> If one listens to academics, one might make the mistake of thinking they would like their complaints to be remedied; but in fact the complaints of academics are their treasures, and were you to remove them, you would find either that they had been instantly replenished or that you were now their object. The reason that academics want and need their complaints is that it is important to them to feel oppressed, for in the psychic economy of the academy, oppression is the sign of virtue. . . . The essence of it all is contained in the very first aphorism I ever formulated, in 1964 as I watched my colleagues at Berkeley turn from abasing themselves before deans and boards of trustees to abasing themselves before students—*Academics like to eat shit, and in a pinch, they don't care whose shit they eat.*

This being Fish's perspective on the situation, it is understandable that he is not excessively sympathetic when people complain that, in hiring stars at what are, by U.I.C. standards, astronomical salaries (these new professors are paid between a hundred and thirty thousand and a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars a year; the average senior faculty member gets ninety thousand), he is trying to make the university into something it isn't and shouldn't try to be. Fish has, accordingly, stirred up some resentment in people who dislike his Napoleonic style. "I am a humble peon in the field," Nancy Cirillo, a professor in the English department, intones, with bitter sarcasm. "I toil in the vineyard. Perhaps it is not in the dean's idea of how to run the institution that he should communicate his plans to the workers." Curiously, agricultural metaphors are also used by those who are in favor of the renovation. "Stanley has changed our self-esteem," John Huntington, another professor of English, says. "In the past, we were always a little bit apologetic. We were tilling our row, and doing it pretty well, I think, but we didn't have ambitions to be part of a larger conversation."

Whether people like Fish or not, though, they tend to find him fascinating. "He's totally without pretense and totally self-absorbed, which is an unusual combination," one professor says. Fish came to U.I.C. with such a disquieting reputation for radicalism and belligerence that he now gets extra credit for his customary friendliness. This has, in fact, always been the case for him. "When I was at Berkeley," Walter Benn Michaels says, "there was a guy in the English department, just a beyond-belief tedious guy, who was one of the people who resented Stanley and his success. But this guy once stopped me in the hall—everyone always fled from him in the hall; you'd rather open a vein than hear him talk about his work—and said, 'You know, I have mixed feelings about Stanley Fish, but he is the only one around here who will always stop me and ask how my work is going.' "

One reason for Fish's friendliness is that he is an unusually—he might say neurotically—social person. When he is left alone, he feels suddenly small and vulnerable, and is prone to anxious vacillations between the fear that he will be forced to confront his inner demons and the fear that he doesn't have any. Fortunately, he is also a neurotically clean and tidy person, and he has found that mastering mess through activities such as vacuuming or making the bed goes a surprisingly long way toward filling the void left by the absence of human companionship. "My wife has explained to me that I'm anal compulsive and that that has its source in my anxiety about losing control," Fish says. "She has told me that many times, and I know it's true, but it is not the case that this knowledge has liberated me."

On Wednesday afternoon, Fish was scheduled to meet with a candidate for the chairmanship of Jewish Studies—a program that did not yet exist but in whose existence Fish was taking an active interest, in part because he anticipated that finding donors would be easy. Fish has made it one of his projects to turn U.I.C. into a center for the study of hyphenated Americans—Jewish-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Arab-Americans, etc.—and a comprehensive religious-studies curriculum is part of his plan. He and Lawrence Poston, whom he had invited to sit in on the meeting, explained all this to the candidate.

"We don't have Muslim studies, but we're going to be teaching Hindi-Urdu for the first time next fall," Poston said, reciting the college's religious offerings. He came upon a deficit, and made an apologetic face. "We don't have anyone in Christian reform traditions."

"Paul Griffiths," Fish interrupted. "He can only do Catholics? He can't do Christians in general?"

"Oh, he can," Poston corrected. "He'll even do Buddhists, though he's been very leery when I've asked him."

The candidate sat forward to present a few ideas of his own. "One thing I think would work very well here is a program in Jewish education," he said. "There's been an incredible amount of money poured into Jewish day schools, as opposed to Hebrew schools, which everybody realizes are a nightmare—they just produce Harold Blooms."

Fish cackled. "I'll let that one pass."

"So there's an enormous amount of money," the candidate continued, "but no teachers with serious training. Most of the teachers are unemployable rabbis."

"Unemployable rabbis?" Fish said, liking the sound of the phrase. "Couldn't they be weathermen or something? All you'd need is a job where the main talent was making portentous announcements."

Fish brought the candidate up to date on the progress of Jewish Studies toward actual programship. "Last year, I decided on the basis of no authorization whatsoever to simply do it," Fish said. "I had a wealthy-Jews party at my apartment. Are you willing to talk to donors?"

"Oh, yes. I like fund-raising, actually."

"I do, too."

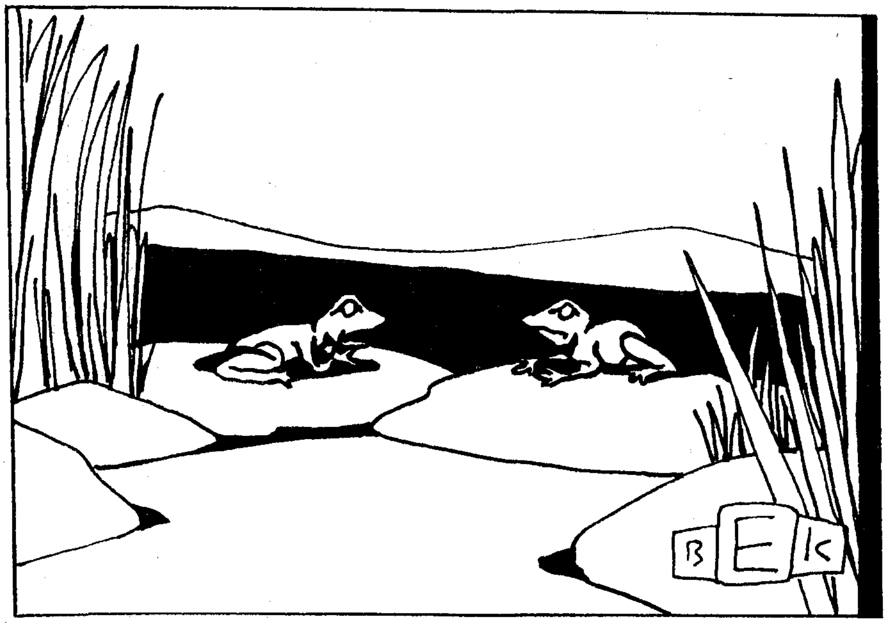
"Good dinners."

"Rich people are fun!" Fish said, extending his hands outward in a what-can-you-do? gesture.

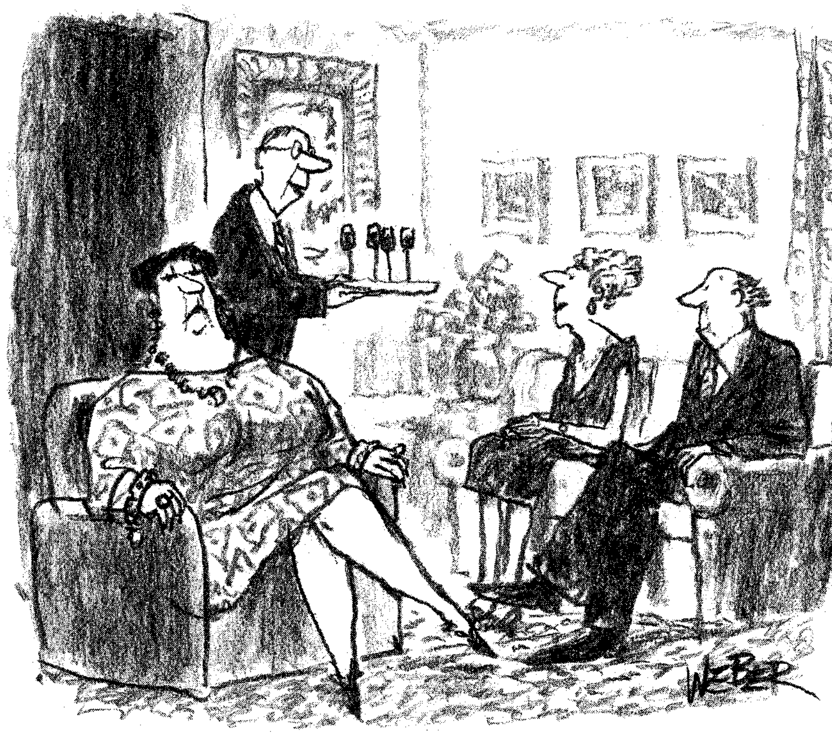
"They really are."

After the meeting, Fish decided to drive to the mall. He loves the mall, and his passion for consumerism is legendary. At a fairly early point in his career, Fish and his love of shopping were immortalized, by the novelist David Lodge, in a comic fictional character named Morris Zapp. This followed, confusingly but not coincidentally, Fish's self-immortalization in the comic nonfictional character named Stanley Fish. Morris Zapp only added lustre and comic depth to Stanley Fish, and Fish himself was thrilled. "Stanley rather exaggerates the resemblance, actually," Lodge says.

Morris Zapp made his first appearance in 1975, in "Changing Places," an academic satire. Morris Zapp, Lodge wrote, "was that rarity among American Humanities Professors, a totally un-



"I miss that sense of fulfillment I had when I was part of a plague."



"Delphine has been interviewed for, and accepted by, 'Survivor.'"

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alienated man. He liked America. . . . His needs were simple: a temperate climate, a good library, plenty of inviting ass around the place and enough money to keep him in cigars and liquor and to run a comfortable modern house and two cars." This was precisely the image that Fish was trying to cultivate when he knew Lodge, at Berkeley in the late sixties, where Fish was a young professor and Lodge was a visiting lecturer from England. Fish was at that point married to his first wife, Adrienne, and had a small daughter (Susan, now a thirty-three-year-old biostatistician). "Stanley was a very glamorous figure to me," Lodge says. "He had an Alfa Romeo. He had an unashamed love of popular culture at a time when most academics would only indulge that covertly—it was thought to be slightly unprofessional. He loved pop music; he used to write his books while watching baseball on television; and he was completely unawed by European culture. He had these witticisms like 'Travel narrows the mind.'"

Fish loves fancy clothes and fancy stuff in general. He is famous for his cars. At the moment, he owns only the one Jaguar, but in the course of his life he has owned practically every luxury car in existence. About ten years ago, he gave a talk of transcendent comic brilliance, entitled "The Unbearable Ugliness of Volvos," in which he argued that academics' habit of purchasing hideous cars was the result of the perverse need to take pride in their own misery. Fish himself comes from a working-class background in Rhode Island: his father was a plumber, a Jewish immigrant from Poland. In high school, Fish was suspended twice—once for breaking windows, once for running a baseball betting pool. He was the first person in his family to go to college (he was an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania and attended graduate school at Yale). The happy consequence is that he finds he can now enjoy the fruits of his labor with no guilt pangs whatsoever.

Earning a really big salary—currently two hundred and forty-nine thousand dollars—has, to his mind, the double advantage of contributing to his image as the type of guy who buys fancy cars, while at the same time enabling him to actually *be* a guy who buys fancy cars. At one point in the seventies, Fish gave a talk at Wellesley on why people believe what they believe, and, as Michael Fried, then a colleague of his, tells it, "Someone asked, 'Well, why should we believe *you*?' And he said, 'Because I'm Stanley Fish and I teach at Johns Hopkins and I make seventy-five thousand dollars a year.' People just died. It was so Morris Zapp."

But, while Fish has a simple relationship to earning and buying, his relationship to ownership is complex. A few days before his trip to the mall, for instance, Fish appeared in the office carrying a Montblanc pen that his wife had given him fifteen years previously but that he had been too afraid to take out of his desk drawer, lest he lose it. He did lose it several times in the course of that day, which is to say that he put it down and was then unable to locate it for twenty seconds or more, and each time he found himself experiencing a sensation that unpleasantly and illogically combined an acute feeling of personal guilt with a sense that the loss was inevitable and served as another reminder, as if he needed reminding, of the precariousness of joy in the world. (He has not used the pen since.) By merit of being a gift, the pen had acquired the unfortunate and anxiety-producing quality of uniqueness. In the case of possessions that Fish buys for himself, he has a far less stressful means of overcoming his fear of loss: he buys lots and lots of them. "At one time, I had four cars," he says. "I was worried about running out. You know, one might be in the shop, one might need to be painted."

That day, Fish's chief mission at the mall was to try on two suits that he had bought at Marshall Field's. Fish likes his suits to fit just so, and these particular suits had already been altered and found wanting. Making his way through the men's-clothing section, he stopped to poke through a pile of T-shirts that were on sale. "Nine ninety-nine," he said. "Not bad. Not bad."

He collected his suits from a salesman in the suit department, Mr. Choi, and retired to try them on. Fish does many things fast, but he changes his clothes very slowly. Mr. Choi made several trips to the dressing room to check on him before he finally emerged in the first suit—a loose, slouchy one in wheat-colored wool. He went to look at himself. There were three long mirrors in the dressing room, arranged in a demihexagon, in which Stanley Fish in the slouchy wheat suit could be seen from many different angles. It was almost too much. Fish's lips arranged themselves in a little amoeba shape as he concentrated. He pulled the jacket out in the middle to test how much room he had in the belly area. There was a great deal of room—enough for a mixing bowl or a smallish hat—but Fish wasn't sure that it was quite enough.

"I'm afraid of getting fat," he told Mr. Choi. "Are you sure I shouldn't get a thirty-six?"

"No, no," Mr. Choi said firmly. "Too big."

"I don't like things tight around my waist," Fish explained fretfully. "It's psychological. That's why my pants are always falling down."

On Monday evenings, Fish teaches a course on Milton. His class at U.I.C. is very different from his classes at Duke, which were, for the most part, composed of well-to-do twenty-year-olds. Assembled in Fish's conference room one evening just before spring break were, among others, a young female union organizer; a man in his forties who had decided to go back to school after twenty years of selling products made by the handicapped; Deirdre McCloskey, formerly Donald McCloskey, the well-known transgendered economist, whom Fish recruited to teach at U.I.C.; Jane Austen, McCloskey's tiny Yorkshire terrier, whom she had brought to class in her purse; and Beth Jacobs, McCloskey's middle-aged research assistant, who was working on Ph.D.s in English and philosophy.

At the beginning of the class, Fish screened a half-hour video of himself lecturing on Milton, which he taped for commercial purposes a few years ago. When the video was over, Jacobs raised her hand and asked whether angels understood evil. Fish, acting on an uncharacteristically democratic impulse, submitted the question to the class.

"Doesn't Eve understand Satan before she eats the apple?" a female student said. "Isn't there a difference between thinking ill and recognizing it?"

"Well, is there?" Fish asked.

"Angels see evil, but it's external," a male student speculated.

"They know what it is," Jacobs began slowly, "but they don't know what it would feel like."

"Aha!" Fish cried.

"It's like in another one of my classes," Jacobs continued, encouraged. "We had to read a book about crack addicts, and I didn't like it very much because I could never identify with the people."

"And what are some of the adjectives that you might ascribe to those people?" Fish asked her.

"Not in control of their own lives."

"Be more visceral."

"Stupid."

"Now we're getting somewhere! According to Milton, you can't know evil unless it's a part of your thought, but you can recognize it as the category of the absurd, the stupid, the insane. That's essentially what Abdiel says to Satan in 'Paradise Lost': 'What are you saying? Shalt thou give law to God? This is nutty!' I've said it a thousand times, and I'll say it again: All you have to do to read this poem in the way that Milton intended is to remember that God is God. That's it. Imagine Adam and Eve in their little bower putting up ten thousand Post-it notes: 'Don't forget! God is God!' They put them on the back of the toilet seat, on the rearview mirror, on the hammock, but it still isn't enough. They forget."

At eight o'clock exactly, Fish declared the class dismissed. "Have a nice break," he told the students. "Don't call me."

Fish started reading Milton by accident. While a new teacher at Berkeley, he was asked by the department chairman, with very little notice, to take over the teaching of a Milton seminar the following semester. Feeling obliged to say yes, but having barely read "Paradise Lost," much less any of Milton's other work—Fish was, early on in his career, a medievalist—he informed the class that for the first month of the semester they would be working on independent projects, and he retired to his apartment to cram.

Fish discovered that Milton was unforgivingly preachy, syntactically tortuous, and boorishly single-minded. Milton suited him to a T. One tends to think of a literary person as one who is attracted to irresolvable ambiguities, who takes pleasure in the play of multiple meanings, but Fish is not like that at all. He reads like a prosecutor. "Did I ever succumb to the romance of polysemy?" he says. "No. And that's why I'm a Miltonist, not a Shakespearean. Reading Shakespeare is like looking at endless kaleidoscopic changes. Reading Milton is like being shot out of a cannon: very narrow bore, incredible velocity and force. That's what I like."

In 1967, three years after that seminar, Fish published "Surprised by Sin," a book that completely changed the terms of the Milton debate. For centuries, virtually since Milton himself was alive, most writing about "Paradise Lost" had taken one of two sides: the "pious Miltonists" argued that Milton was both sincere and convincing in his censure of Satan; the "anti-Miltonists" argued, as William Blake put it, that Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it"—that Milton's description of Satan was so seductive and his portrait of God so unappealing that it was impossible not to regard the poet's declared piety with suspicion. According to the anti-Miltonists, Satan is portrayed in the poem as a freethinking hero who, by turning away from God and his monotonous, dictatorial paradise, made possible the quest for self-knowledge and self-determination that is at the core of what we value about being human. Fish claimed that both sides were right and neither was. He argued that Milton had created an attractive Satan for theological purposes: Milton intended that the reader find himself drawn to Satan and repelled by God in precisely the way the anti-Miltonists described, but only in order that, in so doing, he mentally replicate the Fall, and thus emerge from the experience with a greater spiritual understanding.

Another aspect of the book's originality was the method of reading that Fish described. Rather than considering the poem as a whole, or in parts, Fish read it along the line, one word at a time, drastically slowing down the reading process in order to examine the frustrated expectations and tiny shifts in meaning that each new word produced in the mind of the reader. (Later, he realized that he was not describing what took place in readers' minds so much as prescribing a method that would allow others to become as careful a reader as he.) Fish's next book, "Self-Consuming Artifacts," published in 1972, adopted a similar approach, identifying certain works of seventeenth-century literature that, when examined in terms of their effect on the reader, proved to be "self-consuming" in two senses. First, the texts cannibalized themselves by encouraging the reader to engage in certain forms of thought—deduction, say, or interpretation—and then repeatedly undermining the deductions or interpretations that he was led to. But the texts also consumed the reader's self, since in finding himself corrected again and again the reader grew to doubt his judgment, until he realized that his mind was not capable of discerning truth on its own—that he could see truth only through God.

In developing this method of reading, Fish was at the same time developing a way of thinking about meaning. He argued that, because people will always read through the lens of their partial (as opposed to divine) understanding, they will always disagree about the meaning of a text; and thus there is no way, in this fallen world, to determine, in an objective manner, who is right. Many literary critics found this idea alarming. They felt that Fish was claiming that words could mean anything at all and that there was, consequently, no way that one interpretation of a poem could be judged better than another. Later, when Fish began to apply the same argument to the law, many more people found his ideas alarming. Fish's reputation began to accumulate a set of standard adjectives, "nihilist" and "relativist" among them.

Fish didn't mind being thought of as dangerously wrong—indeed, he liked it. But he wasn't a nihilist at all. True, he did believe that there was no way to pin down one indisputable textual meaning. But in the normal course of things, he pointed out, people don't have much trouble identifying one interpretation as clever or right and another as stupid or wrong. This is because they belong to interpretive communities—subcultures within which the criteria for judgment are implicitly or explicitly understood. Literary critics know how to interpret because they've been trained by other literary critics to value certain intellectual moves over others; judges know how to interpret because they've gone to law school and been taught what it is that judges do.

In fact, Fish argues, it's not just beliefs about right and wrong ways to read a text that are local to particular communities; beliefs in general are limited and limiting in the same way. But just because they are local doesn't mean we believe them any less strongly. Quite the reverse: beliefs are not objects that we may take up, examine, and discard—they are the eyes through which we see. Realizing that we lack a godlike perspective on the world doesn't leave us without beliefs or principles of judgment; it leaves us exactly where we were before.

Fish is especially fond of this last twist, which he terms his "no consequences" argument, because it tends to alienate even those few who have agreed with him up until that point. Most people he loses at an earlier stage. Conservatives dislike what he says because they believe that without universally valid principles there is no way to make moral judgments. Liberals dislike it because without the ability to step outside particular beliefs it is impossible to derive neutral principles, such as the protection of free speech, that can adjudicate between beliefs without choosing among them. Radicals dislike it because, once the possibility of escaping beliefs is taken away, so is the idea of a revolution that starts the world again from scratch in accordance with universal principles of justice.

Fish's "no consequences" argument sets him apart even from pragmatists like Richard Rorty, with whom he is often compared. Rorty, like Fish, thinks that attaining an objective view of one's beliefs is impossible; but Rorty considers that realizing this—being a pragmatist, in other words—enables a person, if not to step outside his beliefs altogether, then to inhabit them more loosely, which in turn enables him to be more understanding of the beliefs of others. "Rorty characterized the difference between us once when we were at a conference together," Fish says. "He said to me, 'How is it that you're not at all a romantic?' And I said, 'Why is it that you are such a romantic?' "

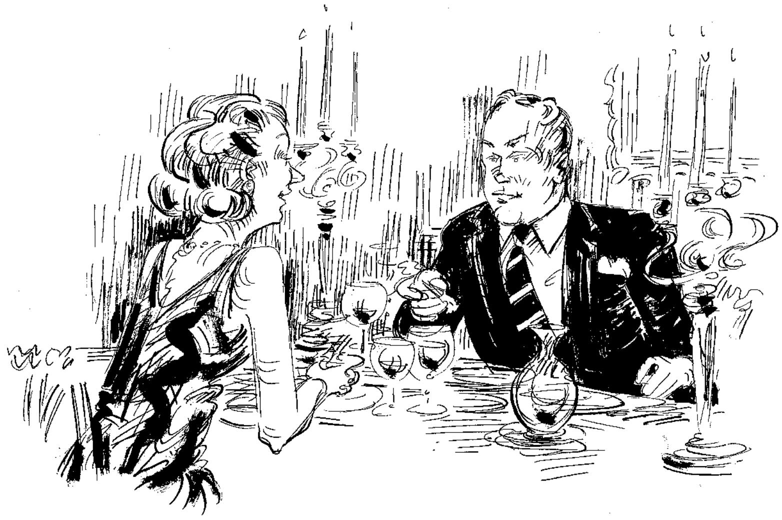
It's true that Fish is not a romantic in the sense that Rorty means: he does not believe—indeed, does not even hope—that someday we will all just get along. But that is not because he's a pessimist: a world in which we all just get along simply holds no appeal for him, since to him that would be a flaccid, liberal world in which people had decided that getting along was more important than conviction. There is, though, in Fish's work, romance of a different sort—a romance of absolutism, of unrelentingness, of the courage to accept that, when it comes to belief, there is really no way out. Fish's theory of knowledge is (not by coincidence) very similar to Milton's: both hold that we have no access to the knowledge we most desire. To Milton, this is knowledge of God; to Fish, it is the means to stand above and judge between competing accounts of the world. But, at least from Fish's perspective, they amount to the same thing.

One of the reasons that Fish has acquired a reputation for believing in nothing is that he cannot resist combative hyperbole. His essays bear titles such as "Liberalism Doesn't Exist." Fish recalls with pleasure reading an article whose author described his attendance at a series of Fish's lectures as a "sullying" experience. "At a University of Minnesota conference on law and literature, Stanley did a particularly egregious version of his bad-boy act," says Gerald Graff, a U.I.C. professor of English and education whom Fish hired away from the University of Chicago. "He gave a talk that just outraged people, and one guy fell into his trap and started sputtering. Stanley said, 'Stop!' and held up his hand and said, 'I'm going to formulate your objection better than you can, because I've heard it a thousand times before.' And he did. Of course, the guy wanted to kill him. I asked him whether he felt guilty about it, and he said, 'Are you kidding? You've got to get them or they'll get you.' " It is rare that Fish feels he has been defeated in verbal combat, but when he does he takes it hard. Once, he was eviscerated onstage by the legal theorist Ronald Dworkin, and afterward he resolved, "From now on I'm only going after that fucker in print." (He titled a pair of essays he wrote about Dworkin "Wrong Again" and "Still Wrong After All These Years.")

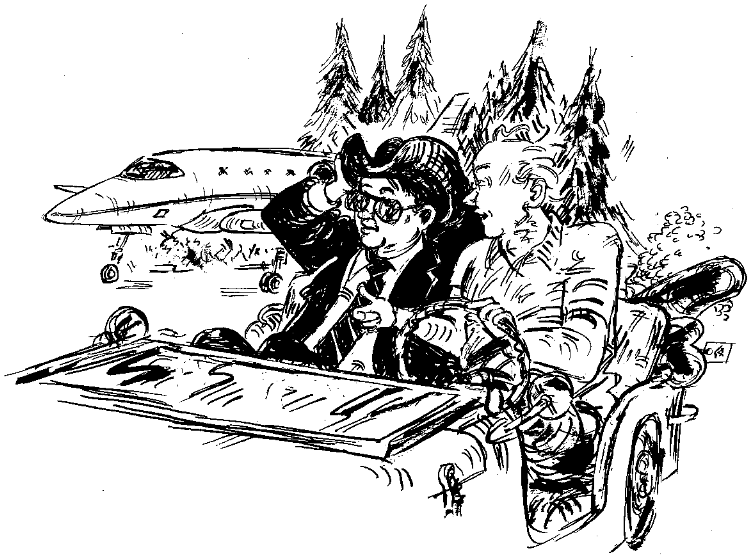
In the early nineties, Fish decided to stop giving his outrageousness away free, and teamed up with the youthful reactionary Dinesh D'Souza for a series of remunerative debates. "In a debate like ours," D'Souza says, "there are two camps: the leftists and the nonleftists. The nonleftists were convinced that I was their guy, and the leftists thought that Stanley was their guy, but he constantly said things that irritated and scandalized them. With free speech, for instance, I would say, 'Isn't it terrible, there's all this rhetoric about free speech and dialogue, and the reality is that campuses have speech codes.' Now Fish is supposed to say, 'It's not a matter of outlawing debate, it's only a matter of outlawing grotesque racial epithets that make it difficult for black students to concentrate on their studies.' But he doesn't say that. Instead, he says things like 'Free speech is a joke! The First Amendment is a fraud! Of course we censor people, and it's a good thing, too!' So all the leftists start becoming very anxious and troubled. My debating tactic was always to separate him from his audience, which wasn't hard to do."

Coming up with all-or-nothing arguments is simply what Fish does; and, in a sense, one of his most important contributions to the study of literature is that temperament. "Stanley was one of the people who brought arguments into literary criticism, which was incredibly liberating for critics of my generation," Walter Benn Michaels says. "In the sixties, people thought that a lot of what you were supposed to do as a critic was display your literary sensibility, and that the alternative to that was a kind of dry, Casaubon-style historicism. Stanley had a literary sensibility—he genuinely loves poetry—but he wasn't interested in displaying it." What Fish helped to do with literary criticism was create a kind of literary public sphere, in which discussion was limited to questions it was possible to have a certain sort of argument about, and which excluded matters of taste and sensibility that, Fish felt, were intrinsically private. (Some strains of multiculturalism have reintroduced sensibility to literary studies—

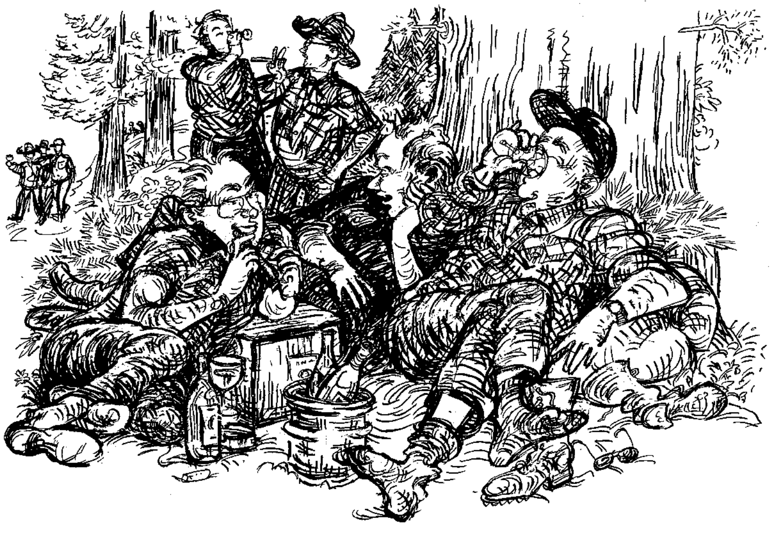
EXECUTIVE RETREAT BY WILLIAM HAMILTON



"Will you be needing name tags?"



"That G-5 you came in on—do you own or rent?"



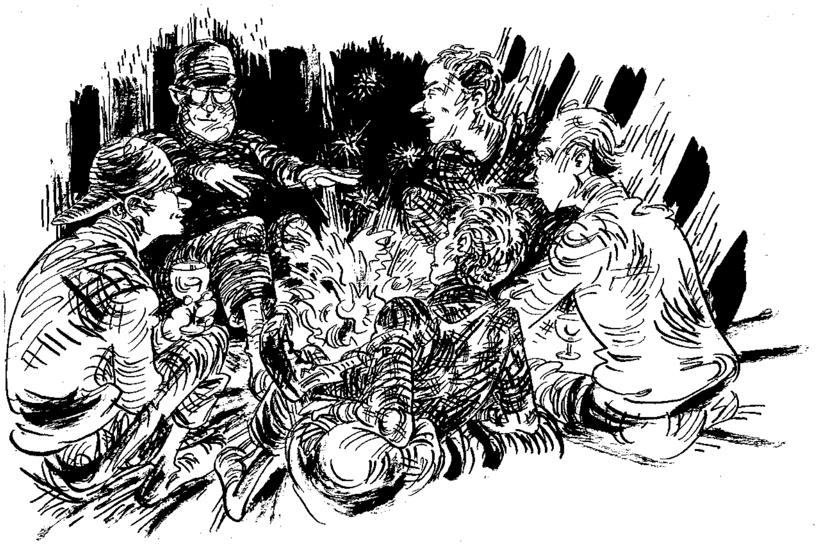
"I love the beauty, the break from family life, and the camaraderie—but what will always make this place for me is the price-fixing."

sensibility stamped by ethnic identity.)

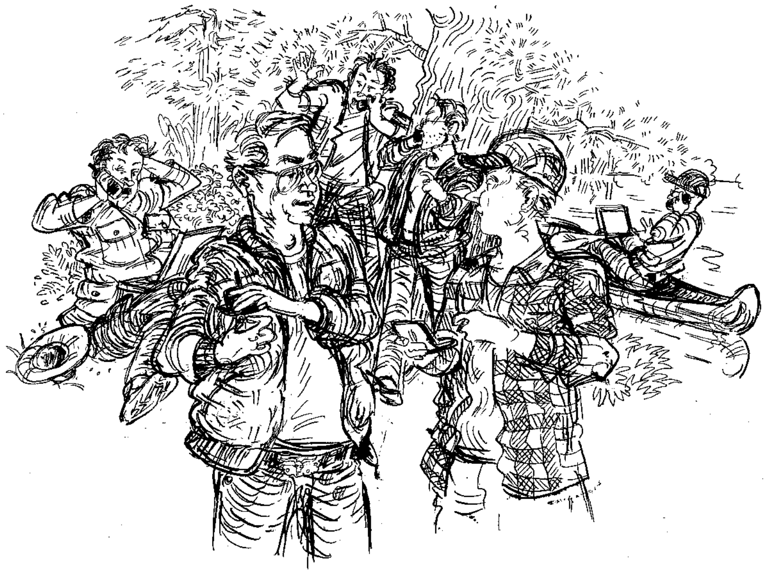
Even Fish's courtship of Jane Tompkins, who became his second wife, took the form of winning an argument. They met in the late seventies, when Tompkins, then a member of the English department at Temple University, sat in on a class that Fish was teaching as a visiting professor. Fish fondly recalls the terrible impression that he made on her. "She went back after the first class and told her husband that she had just encountered the most obnoxious, arrogant, self-aggrandizing, pompous, and irritating person that she had ever met," he says. "I tell her, 'If your husband had an ear, he would have been worried immediately.' "

"I got so angry I would stutter when I spoke in class," Tompkins recalls in her memoir, "A Life in School." "I would go in to see this person during his office hours to argue against his outrageous claims. . . . I stood in the shower shampooing my hair, thinking up refutations of the repulsive propositions we were supposed to believe. . . . Then one day I turned a corner in my mind, did a somersault, jiggled the kaleidoscope—I don't know what—but suddenly, I saw. . . . What I'd seen made my hair stand on end. . . . After that, I never wanted to go back to the old way again." Soon afterward, she left her husband, Fish left his wife, and they were married in 1982.

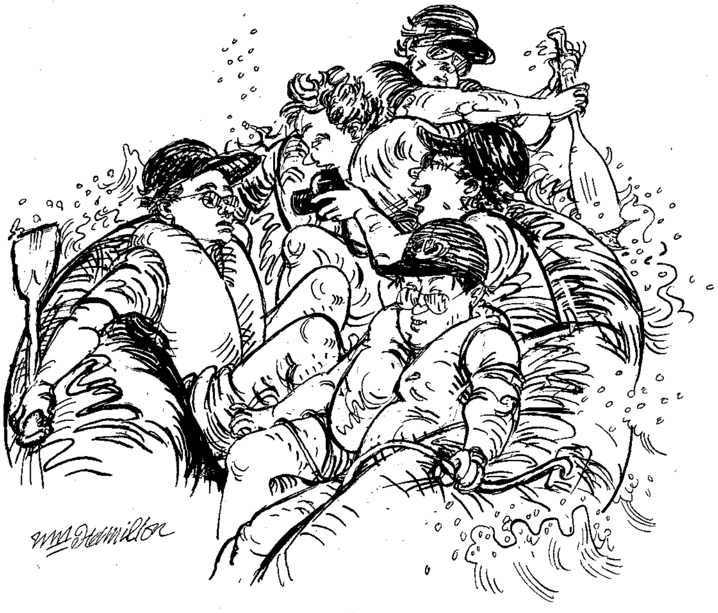
Tompkins and Fish are very happy together, but they couldn't be more different. In matters of real estate, for instance, he likes, as he puts it, pretentious and modern; she likes cozy cottage. (Chicago being Chicago, their current apartment is more him than her, consisting of a continuous corridor around the edge of the nineteenth floor of a skyscraper, with floor-to-ceiling windows.) She goes on silent meditation retreats; he won't even go on corporate retreats. She has written an introspective memoir; he claims to have forgotten his childhood. She espouses what is known as "radical pedagogy," and feels that her task as a teacher is to learn from her students and help them find themselves; Fish says the idea of learning from students simply never occurs to him. ("I run a classroom exactly how you would expect from the way I write," he says. "I like to quote something that a friend



"Tell us again about the time you tricked the Feds into deregulating you."



"My secretary is FedExing the Thoreau."



"What'll you give me for the negatives? I got you showing fear!"

of mine, Stanley Hauerwas, says when confronted with a student who claims he wants a chance to make up his own mind: 'You don't have a mind yet. That's why I'm here—to give you one.' ") Tompkins believes in pondering life's deep, ethical questions, and she finds Fish's epistemological obsessions self-indulgent. Once, in 1985, after he stood up and made a comment on a lecture she had just given, as he tells it, "she looked at me for a minute with this contempt that could go through steel and said, 'Tell me, what is it that you and people like you, who make these arguments, want?' And I blurted out, 'We wanna be *right!*' It was a great moment."

The great irony, or perhaps the tragedy, of Fish's life—one that is not lost on him—is that he is, himself, exactly the sort of person that he has spent his whole career scorning. What Fish loves about Milton is his extreme narrowness of purpose: his conviction that those who disagree with him are going to Hell. What he detests about liberalism is the way that, in mandating universal tolerance, it neuters strong beliefs like those. As the literary critic Terry Eagleton puts it, "For Fish, liberals really have no balls, and his aversion to them seems quite as temperamental as it is theoretical." But Fish himself is, by temperament, a liberal of just that sort. He never takes an argument personally or holds a grudge. He is happy to hire people whose work he believes to be misguided, as long as he considers them smart. He is good friends with some of his most virulent critics.

A classic Fish move is to write to someone who has lambasted him in a particularly nasty way and say that he agrees with everything he said. (Half the time, of course, what is intended as an insult Fish is happy to embrace, as when Eagleton, a friend, called Fish "the Donald Trump of American academia.") Fish wrote one such letter to Harvey Mansfield, a Machiavelli scholar at Harvard, who had written a stinging review of Fish's book "The Trouble with Principle." "He wrote me back," Fish recalls, "saying, 'What's the matter with you? Why aren't you angry with me? Are you the kind of postmodernist who's so removed from any kind of affirmation that nothing bothers you?' "

Fish once published an essay in which he held up as an example of a truly principled stand Milton's assertion in the "Areopagitica" that, while tolerance and freedom of the press were wonderful things, when it came to Catholics, as Fish paraphrased it, "them we burn." Fish wrote, "If conviction is not simply a component in an endless liberal debating society, there is always going to be some point at which you are going to say, 'Not X; them we burn.' And if you are never willing to say that, it is hard to see what you are doing and why you should continue doing it." But the gloomy fact is that Fish can't think of anyone he really wants to burn, and "endless liberal debating society" is not a bad description of his life.

Could it be that, in some strange way, Morris Zapp is exacting a Dorian Gray price for all the fat years? Oddly, although Lodge didn't intend Zapp to be an accurate portrait of Fish, and certainly didn't intend him as a prediction, Fish's life has, in a number of ways, taken a Zappian course. Zapp's marriage broke up, and then, some years later, Fish got a divorce. Zapp was, underneath it all, a rather melancholy character. At the age of forty, he had already begun to brood about the meaning of life. Morris Zapp, Lodge wrote, "could think of nothing he wanted to achieve that he hadn't achieved already, and this depressed him. . . . He could only significantly increase his salary either by moving to some god-awful place in Texas or the Mid-West . . . or by switching to administration." When Lodge wrote these sentences, Fish seemed to suffer no such affliction. He was, in a sense, more Morris Zapp than Morris Zapp. Not anymore. "He's certainly not as abrasive and aggressive as he used to be," Lodge says. "He's more gentle and qualified and a little world-weary. He says, 'I keep saying the same thing and getting misunderstood in the same way.' "

Fish has always played up the Stanley Fish act, to outrage people or make them laugh, but whereas in years past this joyful routine just added a little extra zing to his regular personality, like a big gold medallion or elevator shoes, these days he seems to be playing Stanley Fish like a part he has memorized. Although he is more famous and better paid than ever, and although his books, still widely read and still witty, stand as monuments in their fields, something about the performance seems to have gone stale for him. Getting audiences to hate him isn't as fun as it used to be. He even moves differently. Three years ago, when Fish was visiting the U.I.C. campus to interview for the dean's position, John Huntington, who was a student at Berkeley thirty years ago, when Fish taught there, and is now in U.I.C.'s English department, spotted him entering the administration building. "I saw a man walk in," Huntington says, "and I recognized him, but I couldn't place who it was. He was walking stooped over, and I think it was the stoop that threw me off. Later in the afternoon, I realized it was Stanley Fish."

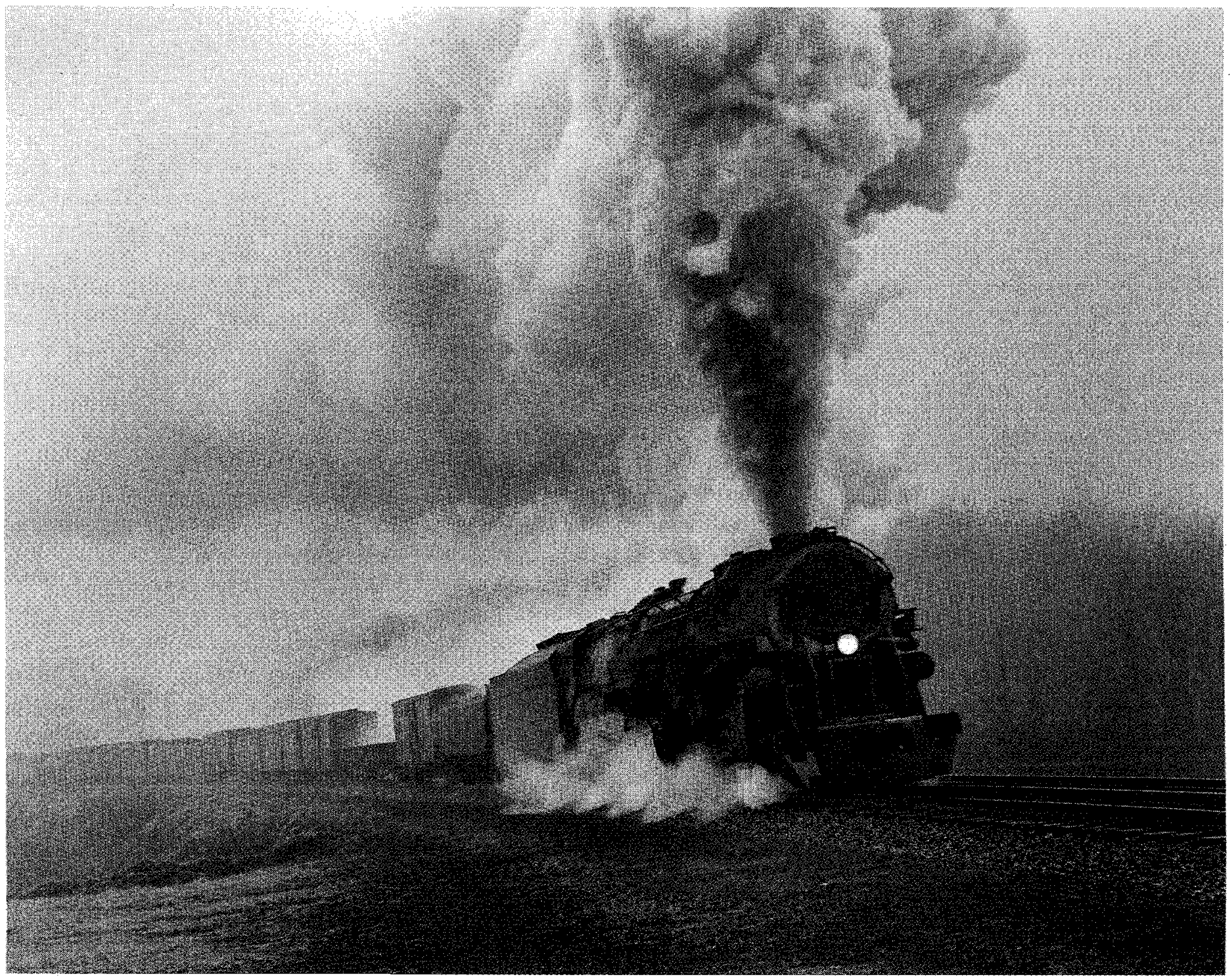
Fish feels that he has written all that he really wants to write. His life's project is finished. He intends to retire from academia in two or three years; in retirement, he plans to play basketball and tennis and try his hand at selling real estate. Meanwhile, though, there is the new book on Milton.

The book, "How Milton Works," describes Milton's struggle against aesthetic temptation as he tries to stay faithful to the only valid reason for writing: God. Fish stays faithful to Milton's piety, but in doing so he becomes less interested in God than in Milton's struggle. In the book's epilogue, Fish expresses the ardent, no-way-out romanticism that Richard Rorty doesn't see, and that Fish himself, while caught up in the daily round of extracting cash from donors and being the scourge of Western civilization, finds it expedient to put aside. "What is fortunate about the Fall . . . is that there is somewhere for you to go and something for you to do," he writes. "In the 'Areopagitica,' the sad friends of Truth have the task of gathering up her scattered limbs, but, says Milton, 'We have not found them all, nor shall ever do, till her Master's second coming.' It sounds discouraging and even despairing, but in fact it is full of hope—hope that the task will never be accomplished and that therefore the efforts to accomplish it will never cease." Doomed struggle is exhilarating. The fall from Paradise is what gives meaning to existence. After all these years of talking about God, it seems that Stanley Fish is of the Devil's party after all. ♦

FICTION

END OF THE LINE

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN



Denise Lambert had always had trouble saying no when she felt wanted in the right way. Growing up in suburban St. Jude, she'd been kept at safe distances from anybody who might have wanted her in this way, but after she finished high school she worked for a summer in the signal department of the Midland Pacific Railroad, and here, in a big sunny room with twin rows of drafting tables, in a Depression-era limestone building in downtown St. Jude, she became acquainted with the desires of a dozen older men.

The Midland Pacific lines were twelve thousand miles long. For every signal and every wire in the system, every set of red and amber lights, every motion detector buried in ballast, every flashing cantilever crossing guard, every agglomeration of timers and relays housed in a ventless aluminum shed, there were up-to-date circuit diagrams in one of six heavy-lidded filing tanks in the tank room on the twelfth floor of headquarters. The draftsmen who tended these files and liaised with the field engineers were Texas and Kansas and Missouri natives—intelligent, uncultured, twangy men who'd come up the hard way from no-skill jobs in signal gangs, chopping weeds and digging postholes and stringing wire until, by virtue of their aptitude with circuits (and also, as Denise realized long afterward, by virtue of being white), they'd been singled out for training and advancement. On a summer day when the sky got whiter and the grass got browner and their former gangmates were battling heatstroke in the field, the draftsmen were happy indeed to sit in cushioned roller chairs in air so cool they all kept cardigans handy in their personal drawers.

Denise's father, who worked upstairs

in the Midland Pacific's upper management, had warned her about the draftsmen. "You'll find that some of the men take coffee breaks," Alfred had told her as they drove downtown on her first morning of work. "I want you to know they're not paid to take coffee breaks. I expect you not to take coffee breaks yourself. The railroad is doing us a favor by hiring you, and it's paying you to work eight hours. I want you to remember that. If you apply yourself with the same energy you brought to your schoolwork and your trumpet-playing, you'll be remembered as a great worker."

Denise had nodded. To say she was competitive was to put it mildly. Unfortunately, the signal diagrams that she was given to copy and file at the Midland Pacific were unintelligible to her. Since she couldn't compete with the draftsmen, she competed with the boy who'd worked there the previous two summers, Alan Jamborets, the corporation counsel's son; and since she had no way to gauge Jamborets's performance, she worked with an intensity that she was certain nobody could match.

"Denise—whoa—God—damn," Laredo Bob, a sweating Texan, said while she was cutting and collating blueprints.

"What?"

"You gonna burn yourself out going that fast."

"Actually I enjoy it," she said. "Once I'm in the rhythm."

"O.K., well, but y'all take a coffee break now. You hear me?"

Draftsmen were yipping as they trotted toward the hallway.

"Coffee time!"

"Snack cart's here!"

"Coffee time!"

Laredo Bob was the low man to whom drudge work fell when there was no summer help to relieve him. Laredo Bob ought to have been chagrined that Denise—in full view of the boss—was performing in half an hour certain clerical tasks to which he liked to devote whole mornings while he chewed up a Swisher Sweet cigar. But Laredo Bob believed that character was destiny. To him Denise's work habits were simply evidence that she was her daddy's daughter and that soon enough she would be an executive just like her daddy. Laredo Bob further believed that women were angels and men were poor sinners, and he was by no means surprised when the Eternal Feminine turned out to have supernatural abilities in the area of labelling and alphabetically sorting thousand-count boxes of card-mounted microform. To Laredo Bob, Denise seemed an all-around marvellous and purty creature. By the end of June he was singing a rockabilly chorus ("Denise-uh-why-you-done, what-you-did?") when she arrived in the morning and when she returned from her lunch break in the little treeless city park across the street.

The chief of draftsmen, Sam Beuerlein, told Denise that next summer they would have to pay her not to come to work, since she was doing the work of two this summer.

A grinning Arkansan, Lamar Parker, who wore enormous thick glasses and had pre-cancers on his forehead, asked if her daddy had told her what a rascally, worthless crew the men of signals were.

"Just worthless," Denise said. "He never said rascally."

Lamar cackled and puffed on his Tareyton and repeated her remark to the men around him.

"Heh-heh-heh," the draftsman named Don Armour muttered with unpleasant sarcasm.

Don Armour was the only man in signals who seemed not to love Denise. He was a solidly built, short-legged Vietnam vet whose cheeks, close-shaved, were nearly as blue and glaucous as a plum. His blazers were tight around his massive upper arms; drafting tools seemed toy-size in his hands. He looked like a teen-ager stuck at a first grader's desk. His coffee breaks he often passed pitched forward like a murder victim, his forehead on the table, his plastic aviator glasses in his fist.

When Denise was first introduced to Don Armour, he'd looked aside and given her a dead-fish handshake. When she worked at the far end of the drafting room, she could hear him murmuring things while the men around him chuckled; when she was close to him he kept silent and smirked fiercely at his tabletop. He reminded her of the smart-asses who haunted the back rows of classrooms.

She was in the women's room one morning in July when she heard Don Armour and Lamar outside the door by the drinking fountain where Lamar rinsed out his coffee mugs. She stood by the door and strained to hear.

"Remember we thought old Alan was a crazy worker?" Lamar said.

"I'll say this for Jamborets," Don Armour said. "He was a hell of a lot easier on the eyes."

"Hee-hee."

"Hard to get much work done with somebody as good-looking as Alan Jamborets walking around all day in little skirts."

"Alan was a pretty boy, all right."

There was a groan. "I swear to God, Lamar," Don Armour said, "I'm this close to filing a complaint with OSHA. This is cruel and unusual. Did you see that skirt?"

"I seen it. But shush now."

"I'm going crazy."

"This is a seasonal problem, Donald. It's like to take care of itself in two months."

"I'm going crazy."

When Denise returned to the drafting room, Don Armour paid no attention to her. She was wearing a short electric-blue thrift-store skirt that in truth she was surprised was in compliance with her mother's Islamic female dress code. To the extent that she accepted the idea that Don Armour and Lamar had been talking about her—and the idea had taken up undeniable headachelike residence in her brain—she felt all the more keenly snubbed. She felt as if Don Armour were having a party in her own house without inviting her.

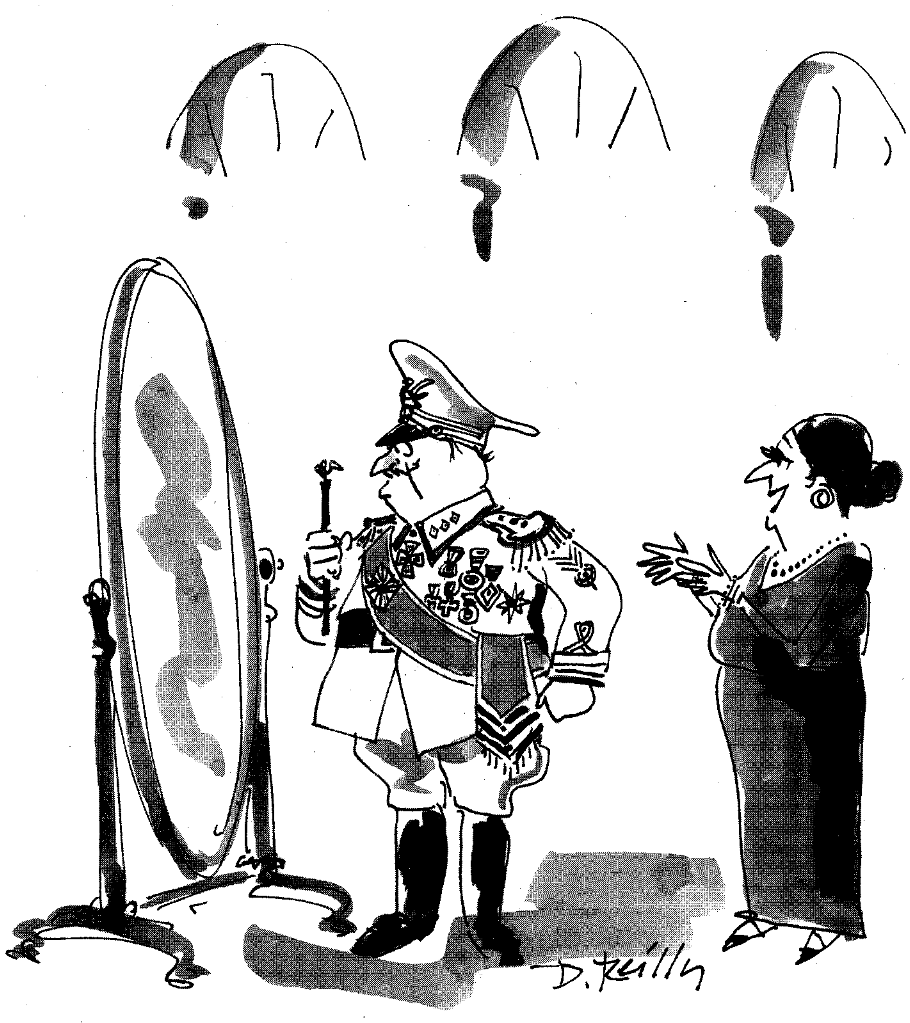
That evening, at dinner, her mother was abubble with enthusiasm about the coming weekend. "You'll have to take the bus home on Friday," Enid told Denise, as they sat down at the table. "Dad and I are going to Lake Fond du Lac Estates with the Schumperts."

"What is Lake Fond du Lac Estates?"

"It is a boondoggle," Alfred said, "that I should have known better than to get involved with. However, your mother wore me down."

"Al," Enid said, "there are no strings attached. There is *no pressure* to go to any of the seminars. We can spend the whole

O. WINSTON LINK, "A CLASS AND FREIGHT, BONSACK, VA" (1959)/ROBERT MANN GALLERY



"Just look at you! How many ex-dictators can still fit into their dictator suits?"

• •

weekend doing anything we want."

"There's bound to be pressure. The developer can't keep giving away free weekends and not try to sell some lots."

"The brochure said *no* pressure, *no* expectation, *no* strings attached."

"I am dubious," Alfred said.

"There's a wonderful winery near Bordentown that we can tour. And we can all swim in Lake Fond du Lac! And the brochure says there are paddleboats and a gourmet restaurant."

"I can't imagine a Missouri winery in mid-July is going to be appealing," Alfred said.

"You just have to get in the spirit of things," Enid said. "The Dribletts went last October and had so much fun. Dale said there was no pressure at all. Very little pressure, he said."

"Consider the source."

"What do you mean?"

"A man who sells coffins for a living."

"Dale's no different than anybody else."

"I said I am dubious. But I will go." Alfred added, to Denise, "You can take the bus home. We'll leave a car here for you."

"Kenny Kraikmeyer called this morning," Enid told Denise. "He wondered if you're free on Saturday night."

Denise shut one eye and widened the other. "What did you say?"

"I said I thought you were."

"You what?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't realize you had plans."

Denise laughed. "My only plan at the moment is to not see Kenny Kraikmeyer."

"He was very polite," Enid said. "You know, it doesn't hurt to go on one date if somebody takes the trouble to ask you. If you don't have fun, you don't have to do it again. But you ought to start saying yes to somebody. People will think nobody's good enough for you."

Denise set down her fork. "Kenny Kraikmeyer literally turns my stomach."

"Denise," Alfred said.

"That's not right," Enid said, her voice trembling. "That's not something I want to hear you saying."

"O.K., I'm sorry I said that. But I'm not free on Saturday. Not for Kenny Kraikmeyer. Who, if he wants to go out, might consider asking *me*."

It occurred to Denise that Enid would probably enjoy a weekend with Kenny Kraikmeyer at Lake Fond du Lac, and that Kenny would probably have a better time there than Alfred would.

After dinner she biked over to the house of her high-school drama teacher, Henry Dusinberre, to water his plants. Dusinberre had left her his keys while he spent a month with his mother in New Orleans. His house was the oldest in the suburb, a high-ceilinged cube of antebellum brick across the street from the boarded-up commuter-rail station. Among the bordelloish antiques in his parlor were twelve ornate champagne glasses, each with an ascending column of air bubbles frozen in its faceted crystal stem, which he allowed only Denise, of all the young thespians and literary types who gravitated to his liquor on Saturday nights, to drink from. ("Let the little beasts use plastic cups," he would say as he arranged his wasted limbs in his calfskin club chair. He had fought two rounds against a cancer now officially in remission, but his glossy skin and protuberant eyes suggested that all was not well oncologically. "Lambert, extraordinary creature," he would say, "sit here where I can see you in profile. Do you realize the Japanese would worship you for your neck? *Worship* you.") It was in Dusinberre's house that she'd tasted her first raw oyster, her first quail egg, her first grappa. Dusinberre steeled her in her resolve not to succumb to the charms of any (his phrase) "pimpled adolescents." He bought dresses and jackets on approval in antique stores, and if they fit Denise he let her keep them. Fortunately Enid, who wished that Denise would dress more like a Schumpert or a Driblett, held vintage clothing in such low esteem that she actually believed that a spotless embroidered yellow satin party dress with buttons of tiger-eye agate had cost Denise (as she claimed) ten dollars at the Salvation Army. Over Enid's bitter objections she'd worn this dress to her senior prom with Peter Hicks, the substantially pimpled actor who'd played Tom to her Amanda in "The Glass Menagerie."

After she watered the plants, Denise sat in Dusinberre's calfskin chair and listened to the new New Order album. She wished she felt like dating someone, but the boys she respected, like Peter Hicks, didn't move her romantically, and the rest were in the mold of Kenny Kraikmeyer, who, though bound for the Naval Academy and a career in nuclear science, fancied himself a hipster and collected Cream and Jimi Hendrix "vinyl" (his word) with a passion that God had surely intended him to bring to building model submarines.

Denise was a little worried by the degree of her revulsion. There seemed to be something wrong with the way she thought about herself and other people. She didn't understand what made her so *very* mean. She was unhappy to be so mean.

She was leaving the Midpac Building for lunch the next day when the top of a utility pole across the street exploded. She saw bright pink and felt the blast of thunder on her skin. Secretaries ran screaming through the park. Denise turned on her heel and took her book and her sandwich and her plum back up to the signal department, where four draftsmen were playing pinochle. She sat down by the windows, but it seemed pretentious or unfriendly to be reading "War and Peace." She divided her attention between the card game and the crazy skies outside.

It was the season of thunder in St. Jude. The air had a smell of Mexican violence, of hurricanes or coups. There was morning thunder from unreadably churning skies, ominous dull reports from south-county municipalities that nobody you knew had ever been to. Midday thunder from a solitary anvil wandering through semi-fair skies. And the great theatre of a good dinnertime blowout, storms crowded into the fifty-mile radius of the radar's sweep like big spiders in a little jar, wave upon wave of dime-size raindrops arriving like a plague, small kids with swimsuits and drenched towels running home headlong, like refugees.

At the pinochle table Don Armour unwrapped a sandwich and opened it to a slice of bologna on which the texture of bread was lithographed in yellow mustard. His shoulders slumped. He wrapped the sandwich loosely in its foil and looked up at Denise as if she were the latest torment of his day.

"Meld sixteen," Lamar said.

"Who dealt this mess?"

"Ed," Don Armour said, fanning cards, "you gotta be careful with those bananas."

Ed Alberding, the most senior draftsman, was blinking rapidly as he chewed a banana and studied his cards. He had a body shaped like a bowling pin.

"Awful lot of potassium in a banana," Don Armour said.

"Potassium's good for you," Lamar said from across the table.

Don Armour set his cards down and regarded Lamar gravely. "Are you joking? Doctors use potassium to induce cardiac arrest."

"Ol' Eddie eats two, three bananas every day," Lamar said. "How's that heart of yours feelin', Mr. Ed?"

"Let's just play the hand here, boys," Ed said.

"But I'm terribly concerned about your health," Don Armour said.

"You tell too many lies, mister."

"Day after day I see you ingesting toxic potassium. It's my duty as a friend to warn you."

"Your trick, Don."

"Put a card down, Don."

"And in return all I get," Armour said, in an injured tone, "is suspicion and denial."

"Donald, you in this game or just keepin' that seat warm?"

"Of course, if Ed were to keel over dead of cardiac arrest, due to acute long-term potassium poisoning, that would make me fourth highest in seniority and secure me a place in Little Rock with the newly merged Arkansas Southern slash Midland Pacific, so why am I even mentioning this? Please, Ed, eat my banana, too."

"Hee-hee, watch your mouth," Lamar said.

Shuffle, shuffle. Slap, slap. Every day in the St. Jude press there were rumblings of an impending merger of

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the Midland Pacific and the Arkansas Southern. The Midpac had come under the acquisitive gaze of Hillard and Chauncy Wroth, fraternal-twin brothers from Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The Wroths already controlled the Arkansas Southern and were now trying to buy support for their takeover from the Midpac's unionized laborers. The Midpac, for its part, had requested that all concerned St. Judeans write or call their congressmen and implore them to block the merger.

"Ed, you know, they got computers down in Little Rock," Don Armour said, never glancing at Denise.

"Uh-oh." Ed Alberding wrinkled his nose. "Computers?"

"Eddie'll be asleep with angels before he learns computers," Lamar said.

"I beg to differ," Don said. "Ed's going to go to Little Rock and learn computer drafting. He's going to make somebody else sick to their stomach with his bananas."

"Say, Donald, what makes you so sure you ain't going to Little Rock yourself?"

Don Armour shook his head. "We'd spend two, three thousand dollars less a year if we lived in Little Rock, and pretty soon I'd be making a couple thousand a year more. We could buy some land in the Ozarks before the girls got too old to enjoy it. Someplace with a pond. You think anybody's gonna let that happen to me?"

Ed was sorting his cards with the nervous twitches of a chipmunk. "What do they need computers for?" he said.

"To replace useless old men," Don said, his plum face splitting open with an unkind smile.

Shuffle, shuffle. Slap, slap. Denise watched the sky stick forks of lightning into the salad of trees on the Illinois horizon.

"You're a smart man, Don," Sam Beuerlein said. "You'll land on your feet no matter what."

"I don't know about smart. I'm not half as smart as Ed. Am I, Ed?"

Ed's nose twitched. He tapped the table with his cards impatiently.

"Too young for Korea, too old for my war," Don said. "That's what I call smart. Smart enough to get off the bus and cross Olive Street every morning for twenty-five years without getting hit by a car. Smart enough to get back on the bus every night. That's what counts for smart in this world."

APOCALYPSE

Of all sixty of us I am the only one who went
to the four corners though I don't say it
out of pride but more like a type of regret,
and I did it because there was no one I truly believed
in though once when I climbed the hill in Skye
and arrived at the rough tables I saw the only other
elder who was a vegetarian—in Scotland—
and visited Orwell and rode a small motorcycle
to get from place to place and I immediately
stopped eating fish and meat and lived on soups;
and we wrote each other in the middle and late fifties
though one day I got a letter from his daughter
that he had died in an accident; he was,
I'm sure of it, an angel who flew in midair
with one eternal gospel to proclaim
to those inhabiting the earth and every nation;
and now that I go through my papers every day
I search and search for his letters but to my shame
I have even forgotten his name, that messenger
who came to me with tablespoons of blue lentils.

—*Gerald Stern*

That night, on the way out to the suburbs, Denise asked her father if the Wroth Brothers were going to merge the railroad with the Arkansas Southern.

"I don't know," Alfred said. "I hope not."

Would the company move to Little Rock?

"That seems to be their intention, if they get control."

What would happen to the men in signals?

"I'd guess some of the more senior ones would move. The younger ones—probably laid off. But I don't want you talking about this."

"I won't," Denise said.

On Friday she was back in the park at lunch hour, sunning herself in one of the tiny sleeveless tops that her mother was unaware she wore to work beneath her sweaters, when Don Armour appeared from nowhere and dropped onto the bench beside her.

"You're not playing cards," she said.

"I'm going crazy," he said.

She returned her eyes to her book. She could feel him looking at her body pointedly. The air was hot but not so hot as to account for the heat of her face.

He took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes. "This is where you come and sit every day."

"Yes."

He wasn't good-looking. His head seemed too large, his hair was thinning, and the parts of his face not stained blue by his beard had the dusky nitrite red of a wiener or bologna. But she recognized an amusement, a brightness, an animal sadness in his expression; and the saddle curves of his lips were inviting.

He read the spine of her book. "Count Leo Tolstoy," he said. He shook his head and laughed silently.

"What?"

"Nothing," he said. "I'm just trying to imagine what it's like to be you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean beautiful. Smart. Disciplined. Rich. Going to college. What's it like?"

She had a ridiculous impulse to answer him by touching him. She shrugged and said she didn't know.

"Your boyfriend must feel very lucky," Don Armour said.

"I don't have a boyfriend."

He flinched, as if this were difficult news. "I find that puzzling and surprising."

Denise shrugged again.

"I had a summer job when I was seventeen," Don said. "I worked for an old Mennonite couple that had a big antique store. We used this stuff called Magic Mixture—paint thinner, wood alcohol, acetone, tung oil. It would clean up the furniture without stripping it. I'd breathe it all day and come home flying. Then around midnight I'd get this wicked headache."

"Where'd you grow up?"

"Carbondale. Illinois. I had this idea that the Mennonites were underpaying me, in spite of the free highs. So I started borrowing their pickup at night. I had a girlfriend who needed rides. I crashed the pickup, which was how the Mennonites found out I'd been using it, and my then stepdad said if I enlisted in the Marines he would deal with the Mennonites and their insurance company, otherwise I was on my own with the cops. So I joined the Marines in the middle of the sixties. It just seemed like the thing to do. I've got a real knack for timing."

"You were in Vietnam."

Don Armour nodded. "If this merger goes through, I'm back to where I was when I was discharged. Plus three kids."

"How old are your kids?"

"Ten, eight, and four."

"Does your wife work?"

"She's a school nurse. She's at her parents' in Indiana. They've got five acres and a pond. Nice for the girls."

"Are you taking some vacation?"

"Two weeks next month."

Denise had run out of questions. Don Armour sat bent over with his hands pressed flat between his knees. He sat like this for a long time. From the side, she could see his trademark smirk wearing through his impassivity; he seemed like a person who would always make you pay for taking him seriously. Finally Denise stood up and said she was going inside, and he nodded as if this were a blow he'd been expecting.

It didn't occur to her that Don Armour was smiling in embarrassment at the obviousness of his play for her sympathies. It didn't occur to her that his performance at the pinochle table the day before had been staged for her benefit. It didn't occur to her that he'd guessed she was eavesdropping in the bathroom and had let himself be overheard. It didn't occur to her that Don Armour's fundamental mode was self-pity and that he might, in his self-pity, have hit on many girls before her. It didn't occur to her that he refused to look at her not simply because her beauty caused him pain but because Rule No. 1 in every manual advertised at the back of men's magazines ("How to Make Her WILD for You—Every Time!") was Ignore Her. It didn't occur to her that the differences of class and circumstance which were causing her discomfort might be, for Don Armour, a provocation: that she might be an object he desired for its luxury, or that a fundamentally self-pitying man whose job was in jeopardy might take a variety of satisfactions in bedding the daughter of his boss's boss's boss. None of this occurred to Denise, then or after.

What she was aware of, that afternoon, were the problems. That Don Armour wanted to put his hands on her but couldn't was a problem. That through an accident of birth she had *everything* while the man who wanted her had so much less—this lack of parity—was a *big* problem. Since she was the one who had everything, the problem was clearly hers to solve. But any gesture of solidarity she could imagine making felt condescending.

She experienced the problem intensely in her body. Her surfeit of gifts and opportunities, in comparison to Don Armour's, manifested itself as a physical botheration.

After lunch she went to the tank room, where the originals of all signal tracings were stored in tanks that resembled elegant Dumpsters. Over the years, the big cardboard folders in the tanks had become overloaded, collecting lost tracings in their bulging lower depths. Denise had been given the satisfying task of restoring order to them, relabelling folders and unearthing long-lost vellums. The biggest tank was so deep that she had to lie on her stomach on the tank beside it and reach down into it with both arms.

When she surfaced for air, she became aware that Don Armour was kneeling by the tank, examining a wiring plan for a signal tower at Milepost 101.35 on the

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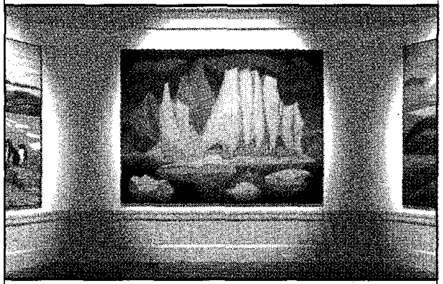
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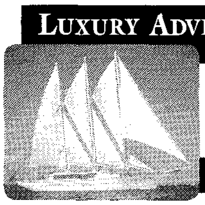


McCook line. It had been drawn freehand by Ed Alberding in 1956.

"Ed was a kid when he drew this. It's a beautiful thing," Don said.

Denise climbed down from the tank, and smoothed her skirt.

"I shouldn't be so hard on Ed," Don said. "He's got talents I'll never have."

He seemed to be thinking less about Denise than she'd been thinking about him. While he uncrumpled an accordion-pleated vellum, she stood looking down at a boyish whorl of his pencil-gray hair. She took a step closer and leaned a little closer yet, eclipsing her view of him with her chest.

"You're kind of in my light," he said.

"Do you want to have dinner with me?"

He sighed heavily. "I'm supposed to drive to Indiana for the weekend."

"O.K."

"But let me think about it."

"Good. Think about it."

She sounded cool, but her knees were unsteady as she made her way to the women's room. She locked herself in a stall and sat and worried while, outside, the elevator bell faintly chimed and the afternoon snack cart came and went. Her worrying had no content. Her eyes simply alighted on something, the chrome bolt on the door of the stall or a square of tissue on the floor, and the next thing she knew she'd been staring at it for five minutes and had thought about nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

She was cleaning up the tank room, five minutes before day's end, when Don Armour's broad face loomed up at her shoulder, his eyelids drooping sleepily behind his glasses. "Denise," he said. "Let me take you to dinner."

She nodded quickly. "O.K."

She took him to a rough neighborhood, mostly poor and black, where there was an old-fashioned soda shop and diner that Henry Dusinberre and his student thespians patronized. She had appetite for nothing more than iced tea and French fries, but Don Armour ordered a hamburger platter and a milk shake. His posture, she noticed, was like a frog's. His head sank into his shoulders as he bent to the food. He chewed slowly, as if with irony. He cast bland smiles around the room. He pushed his glasses up his nose with fingers whose nails, she noticed, were bitten to the pink.

"I would never come to this neighborhood," he said.

"These couple of blocks are pretty safe."

"See, for you, that's true," he said. "A place can sense if you understand trouble. If you don't understand it, you get left alone. The place is waiting for someone like me to come along so I can have the shit beat out of me. It's had me picked out from a mile away."

Don Armour drove a big American sedan similar to Denise's mother's, only older. He piloted it patiently onto an artery and headed west at a low speed, amusing himself by slouching at the wheel—"I'm slow; my car is bad"—while other drivers roared by on the left and right.

Denise directed him to Henry Dusinberre's house. The sun was still shining, low in the west above the plywood-eyed train station, when they mounted the stairs to Dusinberre's porch. Don Armour looked up at the surrounding trees as if even the trees were somehow better, more expensive, in this suburb. Denise had her hand on the screen door when she realized that the door behind it was open and somebody was inside.

"Lambert? Is that you?" Henry Dusinberre came out of the gloom of his parlor. His skin was waxier than ever, his eyes more protuberant, and his teeth seemed larger in his head. "My mother's doctor sent me home," he said. "He wanted to wash his hands of me. I think he's had enough of *death*."

Don Armour was retreating toward his car, head down.

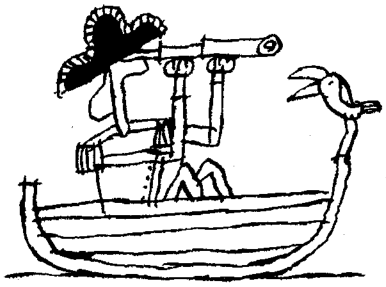
"Who's the incredible hulk?" Dusinberre said.

"A friend from work," Denise said.

"Well, you can't bring him in. I'm sorry. I won't have hulks in the house. You'll have to find someplace else."

"Do you have food? Are you all right here?"

"Yes, run along. I feel better already, being back. That doctor and I were mutually embarrassed by my health. Apparently, child, I'm quite without white blood cells. The man was shaking with fear. He was convinced that I was going to die *right there in his office*. Lambert, I felt so sorry for him!" A dark hole of mirth opened in Dusinberre's face. "I tried to explain to him that my white-blood-cell needs are entirely nugatory."



"You're sure you're O.K."

"Yes. Go, with my blessing. Be foolish. But not in my house. Go."

It was unwise to be seen with Don Armour at her house before dark, with curious Dribletts coming and going on the street, so she directed him to the elementary school and led him into the field of grass behind it. They sat amid the electronic menagerie of bug sounds, the genital intensity of certain fragrant shrubs, the fading heat of a nice July day. Don Armour put his arms around her belly, his chin on her shoulder. They listened to the dull pops of small-bore fireworks.

In her house after dark, in the frost of its air-conditioning, she tried to move him quickly toward the stairs, but he lingered in the dining room. She was pierced by the unfairness of the impression that the house was obviously making. Although her parents weren't wealthy, her mother so yearned for a certain kind of elegance and had worked so hard to achieve it that to Don Armour the house must have looked like the house of rich people. He seemed reluctant to tread on the carpeting. He stopped and took proper note, as possibly no one else ever had, of the Waterford goblets and candy dishes that Enid kept on display in the breakfront. His eyes fell on each object, the music boxes, the Parisian street scenes, the matching and beautifully upholstered furniture, as they'd fallen on Denise's body—was it just today? Today at lunch?

She put her large hand in his larger hand, knitted her fingers into his, and pulled him toward the stairs.

In her bedroom, on his knees, he planted his thumbs on her hip bones and pressed his mouth to her thighs and then to her whatever; she felt returned to a childhood world of C. S. Lewis and the Brothers Grimm, where a touch could be transformative. His hands made her hips into a woman's hips, his mouth made her thighs into a woman's thighs, her whatever into a cunt. These were the advantages of being wanted by someone older—to be given a guided tour of the state of her morphology, to have its usefulness elucidated by a person for whom it was just the ticket.

Boys her own age wanted *something*, but they didn't seem to know what. Boys her own age wanted approximately. Her function—the role she'd played on more than one lousy date—was to help them learn more specifically what they wanted, to unbutton her shirt and give them suggestions, to (as it were) flesh out their rather rudimentary ideas.

Don Armour wanted her minutely, inch by inch. She appeared to make brilliant sense to him. Simply possessing a body had never much helped her, but seeing it as a thing that she herself might want—imagining herself as Don Armour, desiring the various parts of herself—made her possession of it more forgivable. She had what the man expected to find. There was no anxiety to his location and appreciation of each feature.

When she unhooked her bra, Don bowed his head and shut his eyes, as if with pain.

"What is it?"

"A person could die of how beautiful you are."

This she liked, yes.

On her eighteenth birthday, her theatre friends had given her a hollowed-out Bible containing a nip of Seagram's and three candy-colored condoms, which came in handy now.

Don Armour's head, looming above her, was a lion's head, a jack-o'-lantern. When he came, he roared. His subsiding sighs overtook one another, overlapped almost. Oh, oh, oh, oh. She'd never heard anything like it.

There was blood in proportion to her pain, which had been fairly bad, and in reverse proportion to her pleasure, which had been mainly in her head. In the dark, after she'd grabbed a dirty towel from the laundry basket in the hall closet, she pumped her fist at having achieved nonvirginity before she left for college.

Less wonderful was the presence of a large and slightly bloody man in her

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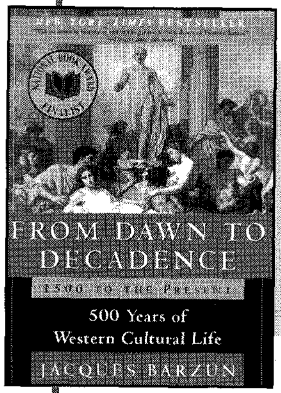
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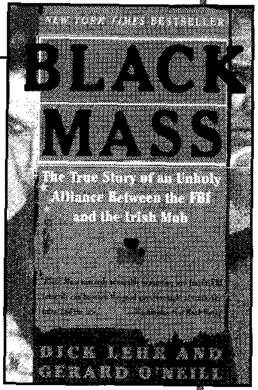
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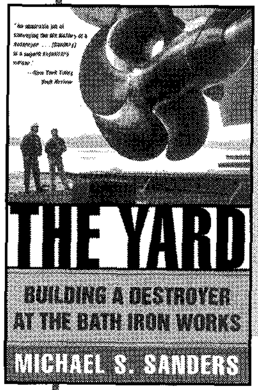
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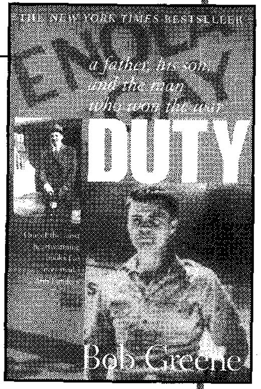
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bed. It was a single bed, the only bed she'd ever slept in, and she was very tired. This perhaps explained why she made a fool of herself by standing in the middle of her room, with a towel wrapped around her, and quite unexpectedly weeping.

She loved Don Armour for getting up and wrapping his arms around her and not minding that she was a child. He put her to bed, found a pajama top for her, helped her into it. Kneeling by the bed, he drew the sheet up over her shoulder and stroked her head as she had to assume he often stroked his daughters' heads. He did this until she was nearly asleep. Then the theatre of his stroking expanded into regions that she had to assume were off-limits with his daughters. She tried to stay half-asleep, but he came at her more insistently, more scratchily. Everything he did either tickled or hurt, and when she made so bold as to whimper, she had her first experience of a man's hands pressing on her head, pushing her southward.

She was thankful that when he was done he didn't try to spend the night. He left her room and she lay utterly still, straining to hear what he was doing and whether he was coming back. Finally she heard the click of the front door's latch and the whinny of his big car's starter.

She slept until noon and was showering in the downstairs bathroom, trying to comprehend what she'd done, when she heard the front door again. Heard voices. She madly rinsed her hair, madly towelled off, and burst out of the bathroom.

Her father was lying down in the den. Her mother was rinsing out the insulated picnic hamper in the kitchen sink.

"Denise, you didn't eat any of the dinner I left you!" Enid cried. "It doesn't look like you've touched a single thing."

"I thought you guys were coming back tomorrow."

"Lake Fond du Lac was *not* what we expected," Enid said. "I don't know what the Dribletts were thinking. It was a big nothing."

At the bottom of the stairs were two overnight bags. Denise ran past them and up to her bedroom, where condom wrappers and bloody linens were visible from the doorway. She closed the door behind her.

"Don't bring the cares of the barn out into the pasture."

Returning to work on Monday, she found her summer ruined. Don Armour was too embarrassed, or discreet, to meet her eyes, and the friendliness of the other draftsmen felt suddenly suspect; it all seemed liable to lead to fucking. There was nothing left for Denise at work but work, and now its dullness was a burden, now she hated it. By the end of the day, her face and neck hurt from holding back tears and working at speeds that only a person working happily could maintain without discomfort.

This, she told herself, was what happened when you acted on an impulse. A dirty and appealing possibility had occurred to her—I could lose my virginity *tonight*—and she'd leaped at the chance. But she was too proud to admit to herself that Don Armour wasn't what she wanted. She was too inexperienced to know she simply could have said, "Sorry—big mistake." She expected that an affair, if you took the trouble to start it, went on for quite a while. All Tuesday, all Wednesday, while she gathered courage to propose to Don Armour that they get together again on Friday night, her throat ached steadily.

At home she was even lonelier. She hid the bloody sheet and the bloody towel in her closet and despaired of dealing with them. Enid was naturally surveillant and had myriad idle synapses to devote to such tasks as noticing when her daughter had her period. Denise hoped to come forward apologetically with the ruined towel and sheet at the appropriate time, two weeks hence. But Enid had brainpower to spare for the counting of linens.

"I'm missing one of my good monogrammed bath towels."

"Oh, shoot, I left it at the pool."

"Denise, why you took a good monogrammed bath towel, when we have so many other towels. . . And then, of all the towels to lose! Did you call the pool?"

"I went back and looked."

"Those are very expensive towels."

Denise never made mistakes like the one she was claiming to have made. The injustice would have rankled less if it had served a greater pleasure—if she could have gone to Don Armour and laughed about it and sought his consolation. But she didn't love him and he didn't love her.

On Friday night he took her to dinner at a strip-mall family restaurant and then back to his flimsy little house in a tornado-alley exurb, one of fifty small towns that St. Jude in its endless sprawl was swallowing. His house embarrassed him to the point of loathing. No houses in Denise's suburb had ceilings so low or hardware so cheap, or doors too light to slam properly, or window sashes and window tracks made of plastic. To soothe her lover and shut him up on the topic ("your life vs. mine") that she least enjoyed, and also to fill some hours that would otherwise pass awkwardly, she pulled him down on the Hide-a-Bed in his junk-swamped basement and brought her perfectionism to bear on a whole new world of skills.

Don Armour never told her how he'd explained to his wife his cancellation of their weekend plans in Indiana. Denise saw him again the next weekend and again the weekend after that, telling her parents that she was dating Kenny Kraikmayer, but she could never stand to ask one question about Don Armour's wife.

On the first Friday of August, moments after Don Armour's two-week vacation started, he and Denise doubled back into the office and locked themselves in the tank room. She kissed him and put his hands on her tits and tried to work his fingers for him, but his hands wanted to be on her shoulders; they wanted to press her to her knees.

His stuff got up into her nasal passages.

"Are you coming down with a cold?" her father asked her a few minutes later, while they were driving past the city limits.

At home, Enid gave her the news that Henry Dusinberre ("your friend") had died at St. Luke's on Wednesday night. Denise would have felt even guiltier if she hadn't visited Dusinberre in his house as recently as Sunday. She'd found him in the grip of an intense irritation with his next-door neighbor's baby. "I'm doing without white blood cells," he said. "You'd think they could shut their goddam windows. My God, that infant has lungs!" When Denise said goodbye and kissed him, he seemed not to apprehend her personally. He smiled with downcast eyes, as if he were a special child whose beauty was to be admired and whose tragic situation pitied.

She never saw Don Armour again, either. On Monday, August 6th, Hillard and Chauncy Wroth reached agreement with the principal rail-worker's unions and made an irresistible tender offer for the Midland Pacific. A letter came down from the president's office accepting the resignations of all summer employees, effective Friday, August 17th.

Denise's co-workers prevailed on Sam Beuerlein's secretary to bake her a farewell cake. "I reckon it's a major victory," Lamar said, munching, "that we finally made you take a coffee break."

Laredo Bob dabbed at his eyes with a handkerchief the size of a pillowcase.

Alfred passed along a compliment in the car that night.

"Sam Beuerlein," he said, "tells me you're the greatest worker he's ever seen."

Denise said nothing.

"You made a deep impression on those men. You opened their eyes to the kind of work a girl can do. I didn't tell you this before, but I had the feeling the men were dubious about getting a girl for the summer. I think they expected a lot of chattering and not much substance."

She was glad of her father's admiration. But his kindness, like the kindness of the draftsmen who weren't Don Armour, had become inaccessible to her. It seemed to fall upon her body, to refer to it somehow; and her body rebelled.

Denise-uh-why-you-done, what-you-did?

"Anyhow," her father said, "now you've had a taste of life in the real world."

And so she went East. ♦

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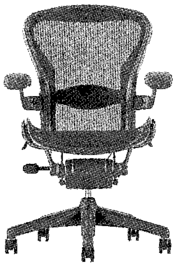

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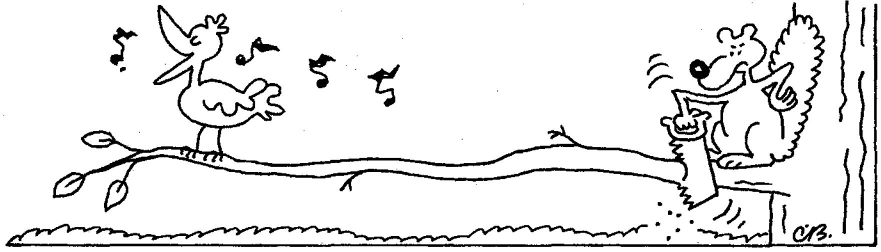


BOOKS

THE FIRST COMEDIAN

Molière's middle-class manners.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

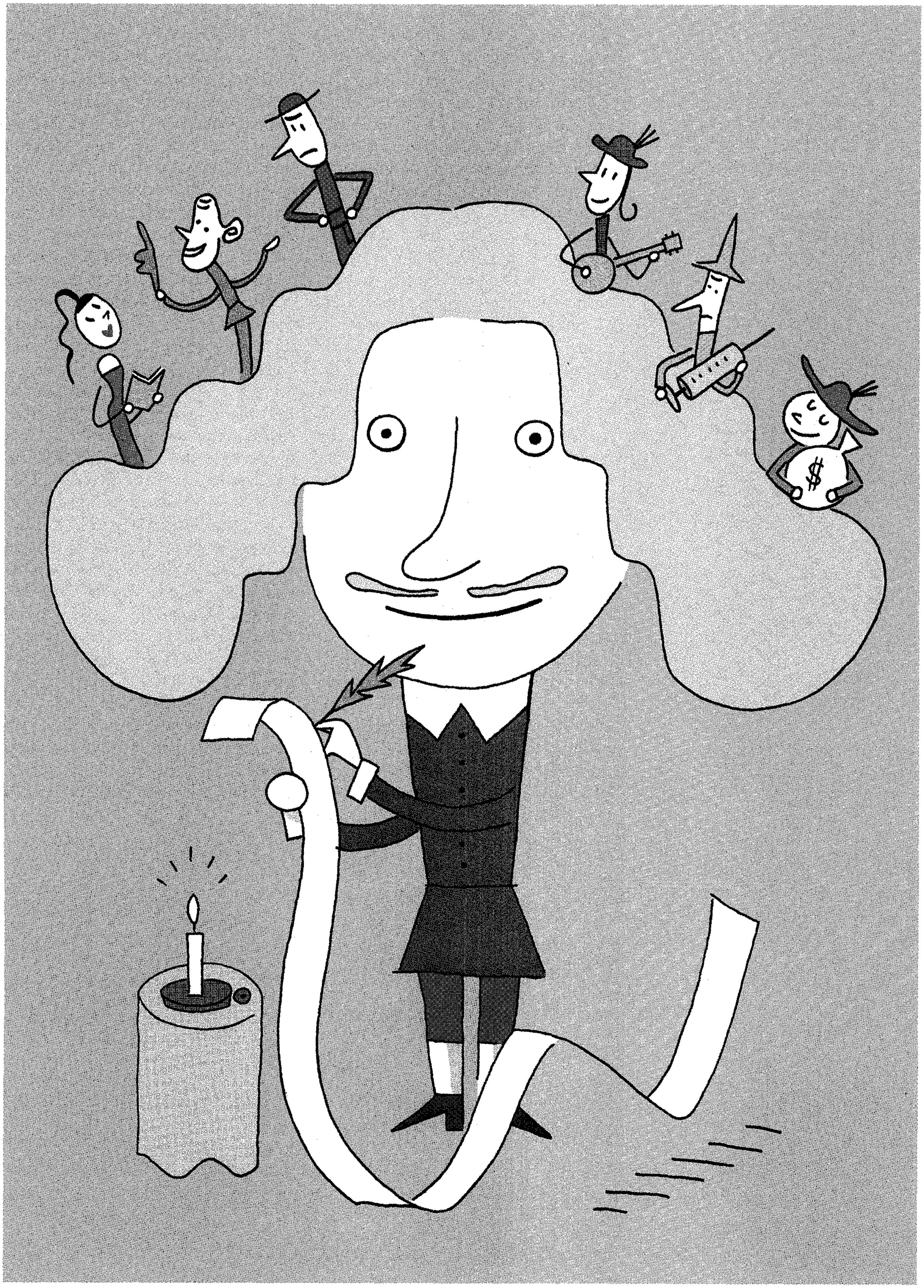
The chicken-and-egg subject of comedy is love and sex—which came first? Is sex a prelude to real love or is love just a fancy name for sex? Shakespeare, as usual, thinks both things at once, but his great successor, the middle-aged, middle-class Frenchman who took the stage name of Molière and wrote plays for about two decades in the middle of the seventeenth century, thought that it was the job of society to bring sex and love into a single official currency, and the job of comedy to announce the unofficial, black-market rate of exchange. Sex is love being spent on a mattress; love is sex kept safe, under one. This emphasis on an open-all-night bourse where social manners and private feelings, status and desire, are traded back and forth, so that what we pretend to feel and what we do feel have nearly equal value, is—from Congreve's bemused aristocrats to George happily announcing on "Seinfeld" that his entire life is a lie—one that most solid, sour modern comedy shares. Molière began it.

Virginia Scott's new biography of Molière, called, simply, "Molière: A Theatrical Life" (Cambridge; $54.95), is the first life of the playwright to appear in English in more than seventy years, and the publisher's blurb announces, helpfully, that "Molière is an important figure in European literature and drama, whose plays are still frequently taught and performed throughout the world." And Dante was a leading poet in the Transalpine region, and Shakespeare highly thought of among the Germanic language actor-poets. Is Molière that remote a figure to the average English-speaking reader? The playgoer knows, perhaps, that M. Jourdain didn't realize that all his life he had been speaking prose, that Tartuffe was a hypocrite, and that the Misanthrope was one, but that is all she knows, and this despite the presence of a series of inspired modern translations by Richard Wilbur. (So inspired that I'll quote him throughout unless he hasn't done that play yet.) Molière, although he is in the Mozart-Shakespeare class as an artist, is not quite the presence in English that Shakespeare is in French.

Well, does he really matter, not in the am-I-responsible-for-this-on-the-life-test? way but in the life-changing, spirit-mending way that Shakespeare and Mozart still do? He does, but one first has to adjust to the reality, as odd a fact as literary history provides, that this servant of the most famous absolutist court of Europe became the prophet and visionary of modern metropolitan middle-class life. What he wrote was not high comedy but middle-class situation comedy—closer to Neil Simon than to Oscar Wilde, and closer to Alan Ayckbourn than to either. The questions he raises—how much school, truth, medicine, faith it takes to run a bourgeois home (with money by turns greasing and stalling every wheel)—are the questions most of us wake up to every morning, and toss in bed to solve most nights. The positions he parodies—the need for pure reason, plain sincerity, and an abstract principle of conduct—are those of the Romantics, who were yet to appear. He is the poet of middle-class life before there was any, as Jane Austen was the poet of feminism before there was much. Nobody knew that the middle classes had manners of their own, rather than just aspirations to other people's, until Molière emerged to mock them.

One of the virtues of Scott's biography is that she shows just how thoroughly bourgeois and Parisian an upbringing Molière had. He was born Jean-Baptiste Poquelin in 1622. His father was a *marchand tapissier*—basically a bedding salesman to the upper classes—who earned, and proudly wore, the title of Bourgeois de Paris (as though your father wore a medal saying "Middle-Class Guy"). He was brought up in Les Halles, near the Palais-Royal, and went to a good religious school, the Collège de Clermont, on the Left Bank. He learned to recite verse, and he learned about Galileo's new physics from a priest. It used to be said, apparently in order to dramatize the hierarchical nature of grand-siècle French society, that at the Collège de Clermont a golden bar separated a duke's son from a bedding salesman's son, but this turns out to be a myth: the boys stood side by side and competed on more or less equal terms. In fact, where Shakespeare's London seems distant from us, Molière's Paris is recognizable, a world whose landmarks and touchstones are familiar, and mostly still in business. Even today on the Left Bank, the streets have the names either of saints—Germain, Sulpice, Michel—or of the Sun King's relatives: Monsieur, Monsieur Le Prince, Madame, Conti, Condé. This was the geography of Molière's education and would become the grid of his life: a crisscrossing of aristocratic and religious interests, where one had to cross streets carefully.

Molière was perhaps the first writer to become that most bourgeois of all things, the bohemian dropout, the first to decide to leave a safe middle-class career in the metropolis to go on the stage, and for the classic three reasons: to shock his father, impress his friends, and sleep with an actress. Madeleine Béjart, the actress, was from a bourgeois family, too. Together, she and the twenty-one-year-old Poquelin started a theatre of their own, on the Left Bank, called the Illustre Théâtre. He instantly took the stage name Molière, apparently just because it sounded good. In those days, the Left Bank was home to an indignant curé; having a theatre there



Molière parodied the voguish obsessions of the bourgeois—faith in therapy, the cult of candor, the sanctity of education.

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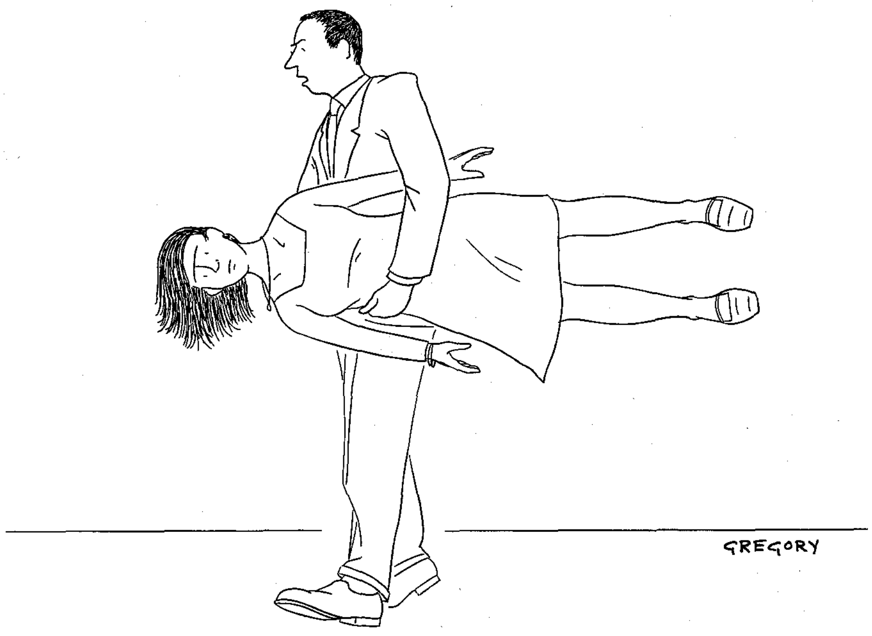
annoyed the hell out of him, and Molière and his troupe were forced to move the Illustre to the Marais. Antagonizing the clergy, and the pious, was an error that Molière would go on paying for all his life. Opening a theatre was an immensely nervy thing for a twenty-one-year-old to do. It was also a disaster, producing a series of flops, quarrels, and lawsuits that left him in debt for twenty years, and that eventually drove the company out of Paris and into the most distant provinces—all the way to Languedoc!—where it remained, touring, for thirteen long years.

Somewhere out there, though, in Languedoc or Bordeaux, the company began to play comedy, in the Italian, commedia-dell'arte style, and Molière began to write farces in French on this Italian model. When the troupe finally got back to Paris, though, it was to try out a tragedy, since tragedy was what Paris seemed to want. The company took over a newly renovated hall in the Louvre and, in a famous story whose truth Scott seems to accept, put on a series of tragedies by Corneille. They flopped, and, in a panic, the company tried a couple of those farces that Molière had written in the provinces. There is always a moment after a run of dark drama when the world is desperate for farce—"Animal House" after "Godfather II." "The Bungler" was an immense success. The king's family was crazy about it: zero to hero overnight.

"The Bungler" is written in brisk burlesque doggerel. With his first two great plays, "The School for Husbands" in 1661 and "The School for Wives" in 1662, Molière begins to write in a finer, stylized, melodic verse. French verse, with all those easy feminine rhymes, is less demanding to write than the English kind; Molière's verse trips by, musical prose rather than "poetry." He doesn't do metaphor, and he doesn't do imagery. That's his strength. The rhymes keep the arguing light. But the verse helped raise the dignity of comedy.

He found a new subject, too, the study of a bourgeois family upset by an obsession. In both "School" plays, the obsession is the standard comic fear of being cuckolded. An older man is marrying a younger woman, fears the consequences, and confides in the younger man, who, of course, is, or wants to be, her lover. Over the next eleven years, though, Molière broadened to include nearly all the voguish obsessions of his time: stinginess in "The Miser," false piety in "Tartuffe," faith in therapy in "The Doctor in Spite of Himself" and "The Imaginary Invalid," the cult of candor in "The Misanthrope," the sanctity of education in "The Learned Ladies," personal polish and manners in "The Bourgeois Gentleman"—it is practically a catalogue of the obsessions with which we still try to fix the ground beneath our feet. Even when the setting of a play is more or less aristocratic—as in "The Misanthrope" and "Don Juan"—we are in the modern



"Honey, let's lay off the Botox for a while, shall we?"

world, different from that even of such roughly contemporary works as Madame de Lafayette's "The Princess of Clèves." The novel takes place in an aristocratic world of intrigue and aphorism; Molière's plays take place in a world of ideas and arguments. His Don Juan does not just put women in compromising positions; he takes a position on putting women in compromising positions. As the valet, Sganarelle, says, "If you don't believe in anything, you have your reasons."

It was Molière's insight that the bourgeois are scarred for existence by the three "I"s: by their insecurity, which makes them by turns irritable and idealistic. Molière grasped that the bourgeois family was a little replicating machine of prosperity but, lacking a firm spiritual basis, was at the same time terribly fragile. It did not believe in its own beliefs. This fragility of purpose means that the bourgeois, in Molière's scheme, are always susceptible to a new obsession—the latest trend. Opinions are the opiate of the insecure.This doesn't make for a comedy of "humors," à la Ben Jonson, where the defining trait is essential to the person who has it. In Molière, the obsession is an illness, a condition: he was fine, and then he came down with a fad. ("Dad was the same as ever until he saw that Tony Robbins infomercial.")

Playing with obsession, Molière makes comedy out of situations that are in many ways tragic. King Lear is the very type of Molière's comic heroes; it is Lear's obsession with the trappings of power which, in the eyes of everyone around him, renders him unkingly, unworthy to rule, and he goes through hell to regain his dignity. That his situation is potentially comic is something that Shakespeare plays with, too ("Have his daughters brought him to this pass?" he asks of Edgar, feigning madness, and almost always gets a laugh), but, finally, it is tragic, because his role is one that a whole society depends on. In Molière, the same obsessions are funny. This is in part because less is at stake: when Dad falls prey to Tony Robbins, the results may be funny; when the Czar falls prey to Rasputin, tragedies happen to whole peoples. And it is in part because the harm is more easily repaired. Dad gets over it.

In Molière, an obsession is normal, and so is an obsessive desire to defend one's obsession. Obsessions even have a fashion quality; they are one of the things you wear. Despite the creaky nature of the situation in "The School for Wives" and "The School for Husbands," what is happening is, surprisingly, up for argument: there is a case to be made for jealousy, and a case to be made against it. Both plays (like almost all the plays from that point on) begin with debates, not premises: the debate is the premise. When Sganarelle and Ariste, the man of passion and the man of the world, argue in "The School for Husbands" about the education of women, Ariste is clearly right, as Scott translates—"The school of the world . . . teaches better, in my opinion, than any book"—but Sganarelle gets his case made. What is aberrant is the desire to leave a case undefended. Intelligent argument is everything. Shakespeare's "golden" comedies, rooted in folk story and myth, show that silliness can shine. Molière shows that sanity can sparkle.

It is to Scott's credit that she makes Molière credible as an obsessive himself, rather than as the wry "detached" observer beloved of French classrooms. Molière had two strong passions: he hated doctors and priests, really hated them, as Dickens hated lawyers, and for approximately the same reason—that they were the pompous guardians of language divorced from reference. Molière's parodies of medicine are really parodies of what we now call therapy—of the overelaborate language that grows up in the absence of knowledge. In "The Imaginary Invalid" and "The Doctor in Spite of Himself," Molière was not making fun of seventeenth-century doctors. He was making a permanent glossary of the telltale signs of therapeutic fraud. When the quack physician Sganarelle explains, in "The Doctor," why a speechless girl is speechless, we hear the Freudian explaining the workings of the mind, or, for that matter, the deconstructionist explaining the workings of the Freudian—circular metaphor, and obscure allusion doing the work of thought. (The translation is by Albert Bermel.)

> To come back to our diagnostic analysis. I hold that this impediment to the mobility of her tongue is caused by certain fluids, which we scholars call noxious humors. Noxious means . . . fluids or humors which are noxious. . . . Yes, these vapors I alluded to travel from the left side, where the liver is, to the right, where you find the heart, and it tran-

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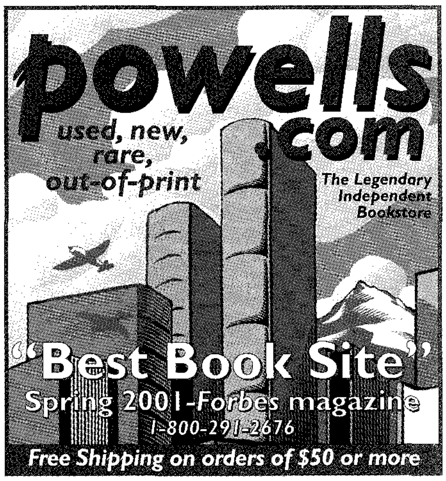
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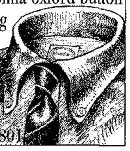

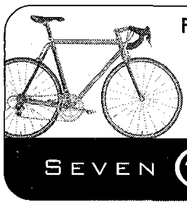
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> spires that the lungs, which in Latin we call *armyan*, being connected to the brain, which we call *nasmus*, by way of the *vena cava*, which in Hebrew we call *cubile*, encounter the aforesaid vapors in their path as they pour into the ventricles of the scapula; and because the aforesaid vapors—pay close attention to this sequence, if you will—have a malign character.

Molière is, in general, suspicious of generalization; living in a golden age of aphorism, he produced remarkably few. In "The Learned Ladies," he is not really against learned ladies. He is against the notion that systematic knowledge can somehow teach the feminists more than the school of the world in which they are already expert.

Molière insisted that he was mocking false religious feeling when he created the religious hypocrite Tartuffe, but there are no attractive clerics in Molière, and no piety; his *raisonneurs*, the men and women of sense, may be servants or layabouts, but they are never believers. "Why put yourself in charge of Heaven's cause? / Does Heaven need our help to enforce its laws?" Cléante, the voice of sense, demands, in "Tartuffe," and though it sounds moderately "reasonable," a moment's close scrutiny—and, if the priests of the time didn't have a moment for close scrutiny, they didn't have a moment for anything—shows that it is in fact quite radical. The raison d'être of the Church, after all, is that Heaven *does* need law-enforcement help; to imply that it can do fine without human aid is to subvert the entire religious establishment. In "Don Juan," the Don's last refuge in his career as a scoundrel is as a man of faith:

> I propose to take refuge in this modish style of deception, and thus protect myself and my interests. . . . If ever my secret life is discovered, I won't have to lift a finger: the whole cabal of the pious will take my side, and defend me against all comers. . . . I'll condemn everybody, and I'll approve of no one but myself. If anyone offends me, however slightly, I'll never forgive him, but shall nurse instead a secret and implacable hatred. I'll appoint myself the Avenger of Heaven.

It's not piety but the piety police whom Molière finds evil.

Molière gave the haters real cause to hate him in 1662, when, having apparently given up sleeping with Madeleine several years before, he married her daughter Armande, who seems to have been typical of all the cool rejecting beauties of his later work. Molière biographers have argued for years about whether or not Armande was actually Madeleine's daughter, as his enemies insisted, and Scott concludes that she was—but by someone other than Molière. In the scandal-mongering imagination, though, incest was piled on impiety. Molière did what he could, which was to write his way past it all.

Fortunately, the King was mostly on his side. Molière had been the author of the theatrical entertainment at the country house of Finance Minister Fouquet on the evening, in August, 1661, when the young King Louis made his famous first visit there. He took Fouquet's architect to build his house, which became Versailles, and took Molière home to write his plays. It is a little hard to see how Louis, in love with vast formal pageants, could have admired Molière. But he did, and even had a story circulated that he had offered the playwright a chicken wing (these days, it's the Lincoln Bedroom or the poet laureateship) to show where he stood. Perhaps we have an exaggerated view of Louis's pomposity, or perhaps, like most absolutists, Louis had a keen insight into the pomposity of everyone but himself. Molière, in any case, was a first-class courtier, who knew how to pay a compliment that was shrewd without being fulsome. He wrote a poem saying that if Thalia, the muse of comedy, came to court she would get just a smile from Louis, as he went on his way to run the country. (The boss never likes to be told that he is doing a good job, because this implies another possible viewpoint. He does like to be told that he is too busy working to have as much fun as he deserves, because we all think that.)

The King's protection could go only so far, though, and he didn't keep the clergy from delaying a public performance of "Tartuffe." For most modern readers and playgoers, it is this play, along with its near-companion piece, "The Misanthrope," that guarantees Molière's place. They set down for good the manners of the bourgeois family, and anatomized the obsessions that still threaten it: religious passion and romantic candor. In "Tartuffe," Orgon, the bourgeois patriarch, opens his house and hands over his daughter to a religious

SHOWCASE

OCCUPIED

Tony Vaccaro was born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, in 1922. He was sent to Germany in 1944, as a private first class in the 83rd Infantry Division, but his story—or the central act of it—really started as the war drew to a close. Vaccaro was a photographer for the *83rd Division Thunderbolt*, and later for the Sunday supplement of the Army newspaper *Stars & Stripes*. He remained in occupied Germany and covered the Berlin airlift of 1948; the following year he returned to New York, where he still lives.

Now the pick of his work has been published in "Entering Germany 1944-1949" (Taschen; $29.99). The overriding impression is not of triumph and defeat but of a ceaseless rivalry between life and death. There are corpses in shrouds of mud and snow, but there is also a shot of American soldiers hitching a gleeful ride down the Rhine in a yacht that had belonged to Hitler. Signs of renewal graze against the comic; the sight of a Darmstadt movie theatre screening "Die Besten Jahre Unseres Lebens," otherwise known as "The Best Years of Our Lives," is like something out of "Gravity's Rainbow." (Did Thomas Pynchon know of Veronika Dankeschoen, the fictional seductress with the lethal initials, devised by the U.S. military as a warning to horny G.I.s?) As for the picture shown here, the Frankfurt *Mädchen* with her skates and her smoke looks prouder than her beau. He is a blend of the wary and the cocky, a novice Paul Newman, and you want to know how he came by that Band-Aid on his brow; maybe he got into a fight over the girl. But fraternization is a virtue, born of hope and desire, and Vaccaro's book proves that brothers do not have to be in arms.

—*Anthony Lane*

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guru; in "The Misanthrope," Alceste is determined to tell the truth no matter what the cost in misery to the people around him. Even today, one adolescent becomes a Hare Krishna ("There was never, like, anything spiritual in our house"), the other a punk rocker ("I'm, like, so tired of the lies").

Given Molière's belief that the abstract is unreal, the plays become studies in hypocrisy, and there are nearly always two kinds of hypocrisy at work in them: a petit and a grand, as in epilepsy. Molière is in favor of the petit form and against the grand. The bad kind involves lying for the sake of your own interests ("I am shocked!" "It's immoral!" "I would never deign . . . !"), and the good kind involves lying for the sake of other people's feelings ("You were wonderful," "Loved the book!" "How delicious!"). The plays are in part about negotiating between these two, between nature and manners, with something given to both.

But in "The Misanthrope" and "Tartuffe" he goes beyond the usual comparison of good small hypocrisy and bad big hypocrisy to take as his target something harder to satirize, and that is truth. Tartuffe the religious guru and Alceste the plain-speaking critic are not only, or merely, hypocritical. Their worst defect is their sincerity. Molière, tolerant of the small hypocrisy that the school of the world teaches, saw that the real challenge to that school would be genuine plain speaking. In "Tartuffe," one of the great scenes in comedy also marks a revolution in consciousness. Tartuffe is caught in the act of attempting to seduce Orgon's wife, and, instead of spluttering a denial, he confesses heartily to the truth of the charge, and then piles on the self-accusations:

> Yes, Brother, I'm a wicked man, I fear:
> A wretched sinner, all depraved and
> twisted,
> The greatest villain that has ever existed.
> My life's one heap of crimes, which
> grows each minute;
> There's naught but foulness and
> corruption in it.

It is the voice of the romantic, from Rousseau to Bukowski, confronting his bourgeois clients—"See, however bad you think I am, I'm worse! Ain't I fascinatin'?" And Orgon, immensely impressed, immediately takes Tartuffe's side. Only a true religious would confess so much, he thinks, and so readily. It worked then, and (as in the literature of punk rock) it works now.

Alceste, a more sympathetic character, is so sincere in his obsession that, confounding the clear meaning of the text, he has been taken as a romantic hero by critics from Rousseau to Kenneth Tynan. This is surely a wrong reading, but it's a vital one. It suggests that Molière understood romantics even before there were a lot of them around. If his Tartuffe could be Deepak Chopra, his Alceste could be Simone Weil, straight-hearted and wrong-headed to the end.

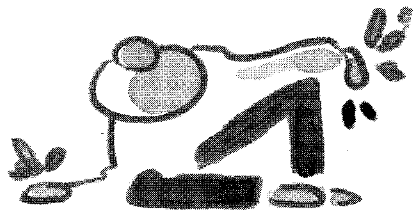
Molière met death on the stage, while pretending to be dying. He had taken the lead in "The Imaginary Invalid," which mocks a hypochondriac's doctors, and was overcome by a coughing fit, which killed him later that evening, at home. It is a sign of Molière's greatness that even death in a comedy could be played only as comedy: he had created a setting, a picture of manners, in which all bourgeois life looked funny, and even death seems like another affectation. The king's acts are touched by the tragic, because they share in the weight of the world, which is bloody underneath; the merchant's are touched by comedy, because they share in the way of the world, which is always absurd in retrospect. Aristocrats wear masks; the middle classes try them on and take them off.

Molière's comedy of temporary obsession is ours. Every night, on nearly every channel, we watch comedies in which one of the members of a bourgeois family has a new enthusiasm or obsession. ("Dharma falls for a new guru, but Greg thinks it's Dharma that he's after." 30 Min. Repeat.) The other members of the family are startled by it, and educate him in the craze's inadequacies to solve his problems. Then life goes on. It is some sign of the strength of this tradition that we use sitcoms as a mirror of ourselves far more often than we do movies. How many people have seen their lives through the lens of Mary Tyler Moore or, for that matter, the Simpsons, even as they dreamed of being Vito or Michael? We use the movies to provide our ennobling metaphors, as the seventeenth century used tragedy. Bourgeois comedy still provides our enabling metaphors, the ones that rhyme with life. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Song of the Earth, *by Hugh Nissenson (Algonquin; $24.95).* In the year 2037, a depressive graduate student chucks her doctoral thesis and takes the Planet Train from Chicago to Tokyo. There, in violation of America's Created Equal Act, she is implanted with a male embryo whose DNA has been enhanced with the genes that determine artistic ability. Her son, John Firth Baker, duly exhibits the traits one expects of a budding Basquiat: he is hugely talented, sexually voracious, and alternately obsessed with and cavalier toward his lovers. This fictional portrait of the artist as a young man is distinguished by the intensely imagined world that surrounds him—a world in which transgendered religious gurus preach over the Web, the rich live in hanging-garden apartments high above the canals of a half-submerged Manhattan, and a terrorist women's movement battles a resurgence of polygamy. Nissenson's prose is always exuberant, and although absurdity occasionally threatens to overwhelm the story, the author's genuine curiosity about his characters and their fates engages us to the end.

Ann the Word, *by Richard Francis (Arcade; $24.95).* This splendid biography of Ann Lee, one of the first Shakers, offers rational insight into the power of belief. The Shakers are now remembered chiefly as designers of American furniture, but they originated in eighteenth-century England as a millenarian, evangelical offshoot of the Quakers. Lee, the illiterate daughter of a Manchester blacksmith, joined the sect in 1758, became one of its leaders, and in 1774 immigrated to the colonies with eight followers, settling in the wilderness near Albany. The Shakers evoked hostility, but they managed to spread their creed despite its demand for celibacy and the dissolution of family ties; they viewed Ann as the female counterpart of Jesus and shared her certainty that the world would soon end. Francis uses contemporary testimony to bring us the terror of Hell and the fear of sin that drove converts to find hope in Shaker salvation.



Divided Minds: Intellectuals and the Civil Rights Movement, *by Carol Polsgrove (Norton; $26.95).* Between 1954, when the Supreme Court declared segregated schools unconstitutional, and the mid-sixties, when Congress passed civil-rights and voting-rights bills, American academics and writers were invited to opine on race relations. In this brisk and understated account, Polsgrove shows that, with a few brave exceptions, whites told blacks to be patient rather than risk white Southerners' violence. Editors were slow to call on black thinkers, and, in the McCarthy era, racists found support for their argument that desegregation was a Communist plot. In 1960, the sit-ins staged by black students interrupted the timid debate, and, soon after, James Baldwin's *New Yorker* essay "Letter from a Region in My Mind" gave condescending white intellectuals a sense of black anger and suffering.

The Botany of Desire, *by Michael Pollan (Random House; $24.95).* Apples, tulips, marijuana, and potatoes. This sounds, perhaps, like a Dutch shopping list, but it's really a quick index to the subjects of Pollan's new book. One day, while working in his garden, the author began to wonder how his role as a sower of seeds differed from that of the bumblebee that was pollinating a nearby apple tree; his musings inspired these tales of botanical transformation. Pollan explores the ways in which four common crops have enjoyed and suffered the very best and worst of human intentions: how apples spread westward with American settlers, how the stock of tulips has soared and crashed, how the potency of marijuana has been exalted even as the plants have been miniaturized, and how potatoes have been turned into a cog in the genetic-industrial complex. The result is a wry, informed pastoral.

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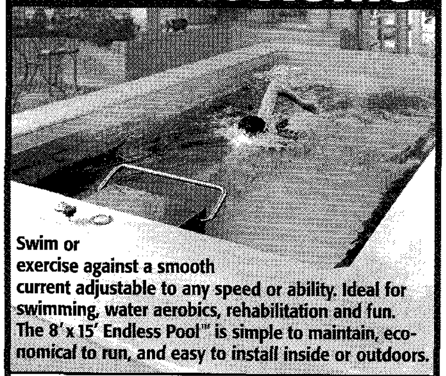

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THE ART WORLD

BREAKING AWAY

A flowering of young African-American artists.

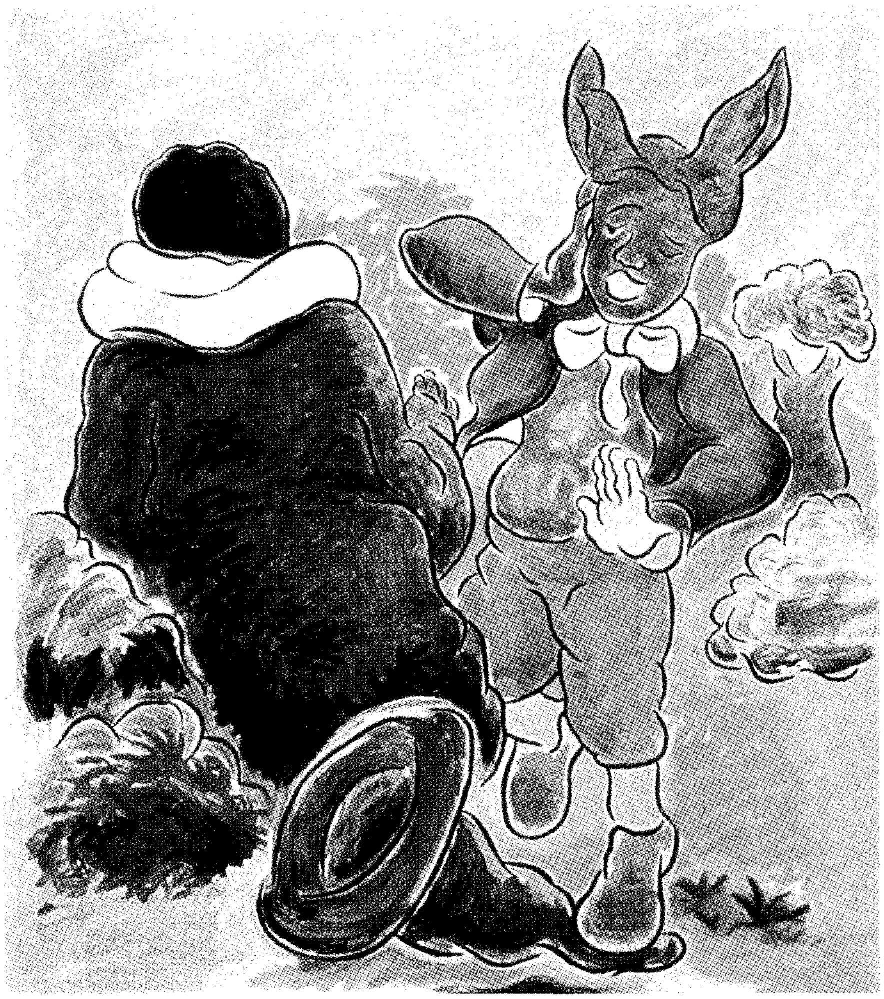
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Suddenly the multiculturalism and identity politics of American art in the nineteen-nineties seem like good things. It is helpful that they are now moribund as artistic imperatives. The reign of hectoring installations and photo-and-text "critique" was nightmarish for art lovers. We got punished for our dewy avidity by stern stuff that, for all its pugnacity, hardly laid a glove on the enemies of truth and justice. If Jesse Helms lost a minute's sleep over a Whitney biennial, I didn't hear about it. Farewell to all that. Political correctness and theory-think have receded from the art world to their normal streambeds in the universities, where academics seem to be recovering their traditional indifference to contemporary art, one way or another. And now comes a fine, fresh exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem to cast new light on the story. "Freestyle," which was curated by the museum's deputy director for exhibitions and programs, Thelma Golden, and which will run through June 24th, presents the work of twenty-eight unheralded African-American artists, who, in their exploration of new realms of aesthetic pleasure and independent vision, plainly owe much to the politically convulsed nineties generation. This exhilarating show suggests that the ordeal of race in America may be verging on an upbeat phase that is without precedent.

Art by African-Americans has always had too much explaining to do. That's because the American art world is both a hothouse of liberal sentiment and, with its elaborately mannered social aloofness, all but lily-white. African-American artists have had to contend with the predicament of being trophies of white tolerance and mavericks from a communal black experience that they are nonetheless presumed to represent. Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden managed token status with grace. Robert Colescott, David Hammons, and Adrian Piper put a subversive spin on it. In the nineteen-eighties, the meteoric Jean-Michel Basquiat blew the game open by transforming racial and other anxieties into lyrical potency. Basquiat's feat was insufficiently honored in the following decade, because his flamboyant painting and his commercial success offended the stringent orthodoxy of the times. Such black stars of that Cromwellian era as Glenn Ligon, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker made elegant work that stayed on message to a fault. Now it turns out that they also provided their juniors with models primed for rejection. "Freestyle" has as little in common with the P.C. seminar as it does with the air-kiss soirée.

All but a handful of these artists are making art that is, first of all, *art.* If there is evidence of frailty, it is in the provisional derivativeness by which young artists latch on to evolving ideas of the day. For example, Eric Wesley's fabulous sculpture "Mall"—a mountain of hand-reproduced studio detritus and other objects (including a book by Michel Foucault)—recalls the Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss. Wesley, who is in his twenties, is educating himself in public. Also familiar-looking, but only at first, are the neo-color-fieldish abstract paintings of Jerald Ieans. I like the sound of Ieans's biography. "Ieans began making art in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1989, bypassing art school in favor of the daily practice of painting," Andrea Scott writes in the show's catalogue. "His classroom—aside from the studio—was the St. Louis Art Museum." I seem to catch aesthetic aromas of that wonderful museum, with its great collection of German moderns, in this artist's overlaid amoebic shapes of brooding color on big canvases. Ieans can make even pink feel haunted. His are some of the strongest new paintings I've seen this year.

The most palpably mature artists in "Freestyle" are three painters who have an illustrational bent. John Bankston, who lives in San Francisco, hatches devilish fables in catchy line drawings done on linen with briskly painted swatches of color. His archaic, low-grade imagery recalls Sigmar Polke's art in its thumping, painterly immediacy. I read in the catalogue that Bankston's "Tranny Witch Mocked by Donkey Boy" narrates the woe of a transvestite seeking love in the forest. He invests this less than oft-told tale with the tickling charm of a children's classic. Kojo Griffin, an Atlantan, also masters a kind of drawing that is redolent of childhood in his pictures of stuffed-animal figures that stab, shoot, or otherwise abuse each other. Griffin loads his paintings with gnomic diagrams that are derived from electronic engineering, the Cabala, and other arcane sources. This makes scant sense, but the eye doesn't object at all. Laylah Ali, who lives in Boston, paints small, tidy cartoons in gouache which detail wordless interactions of black figures with round heads, blocky bodies, and sticklike arms. The milieu of these works is a cruel one, in which wounding remarks by one figure may explain the severed hands or straitjacketing of another. Ali's psychological insinuations cut clean and deep. All three artists are independent operators whose knowingness and mordant styles equip them for effective roles in and beyond the art world.



Bankston's "Tranny Witch Mocked by Donkey Boy": A mordant, little-told tale.

"Post-black" is the term that Golden boldly applies to the sensibility of artists for whom racial identity has become an optional reference. "Post-Golden" is how I'm tempted to characterize her strategy at the sparklingly renovated Studio Museum, which has been galvanized by its current director, Lowery Stokes Sims, after years as a worthy institution of mostly genteel taste. As a prominent curator at the Whitney throughout the nineties, Golden was a doyenne of multiculturalism, pushing agendas that she has now magnanimously set aside. Even then, Golden was a superb judge of quality; the artists she supported were absolutely the best of their kind. Her eye is no less keen when it comes to observing the work of a new generation. In a recent interview that appeared in the *Village Voice*, she swore loyalty to high-art values. "I am the holdout that believes there is no hip-hop corollary in visual art," she said. "I know this is where the Hilton Kramer in me comes out." She pronounced the obsolescence of "a Black History Month label" in the presentation of African-American art. The day is past, she exulted, for "any need to have all those paragraphs before you got to the work on why you were showing the work and what this means and da da da pluralism we are the world, hold hands kumbaya." Hail, Golden!

But it must be noted that some curatorial bad habits die hard. "Freestyle" is burdened with wall texts full of long, sluggish paragraphs. The writers lag behind the artists' liberated openness, to put it mildly. I was enjoying the sass of a video by Susan Smith-Pinelo in which the artist, wearing a V-neck T-shirt, deftly jiggles her large breasts in rhythm with Michael Jackson's "Working Day and Night." Then I read Claire Gilman's assurance that, but of course, "in this classic representation of the female body as fetish object we can immediately recognize the objectification of women in contemporary society," and so forth. Moving on, I chose to ignore the verbiage that accompanies a silent, grainy, quite terrific video by Dave McKenzie in which a young black man, at night, loiters uneasily at the lighted entrance of a closed supermarket. Now and then, he lurches into a bit of muscular but shapeless dancing. Lap dissolves in the tape convey the passage of considerable time. Finally, the youth brusquely departs. What was that about? According to Karen E. Jones's wall text, it reveals the "limits of acceptable forms of human behavior within certain environments." Oh.

Hamza Walker, the director of education at the Renaissance Society, in Chicago, contributes a compelling essay to the catalogue, entitled "Renigged," which explores the vicissitudes of African-Americans in their quest for individuality. Walker writes that old identifications, imposed by blacks as well as whites, can clamp down at any moment. At one point, he asks, "But what happens when history does not repeat itself?" An answer dawns in "Freestyle." ♦

POP MUSIC

LOST SOUL

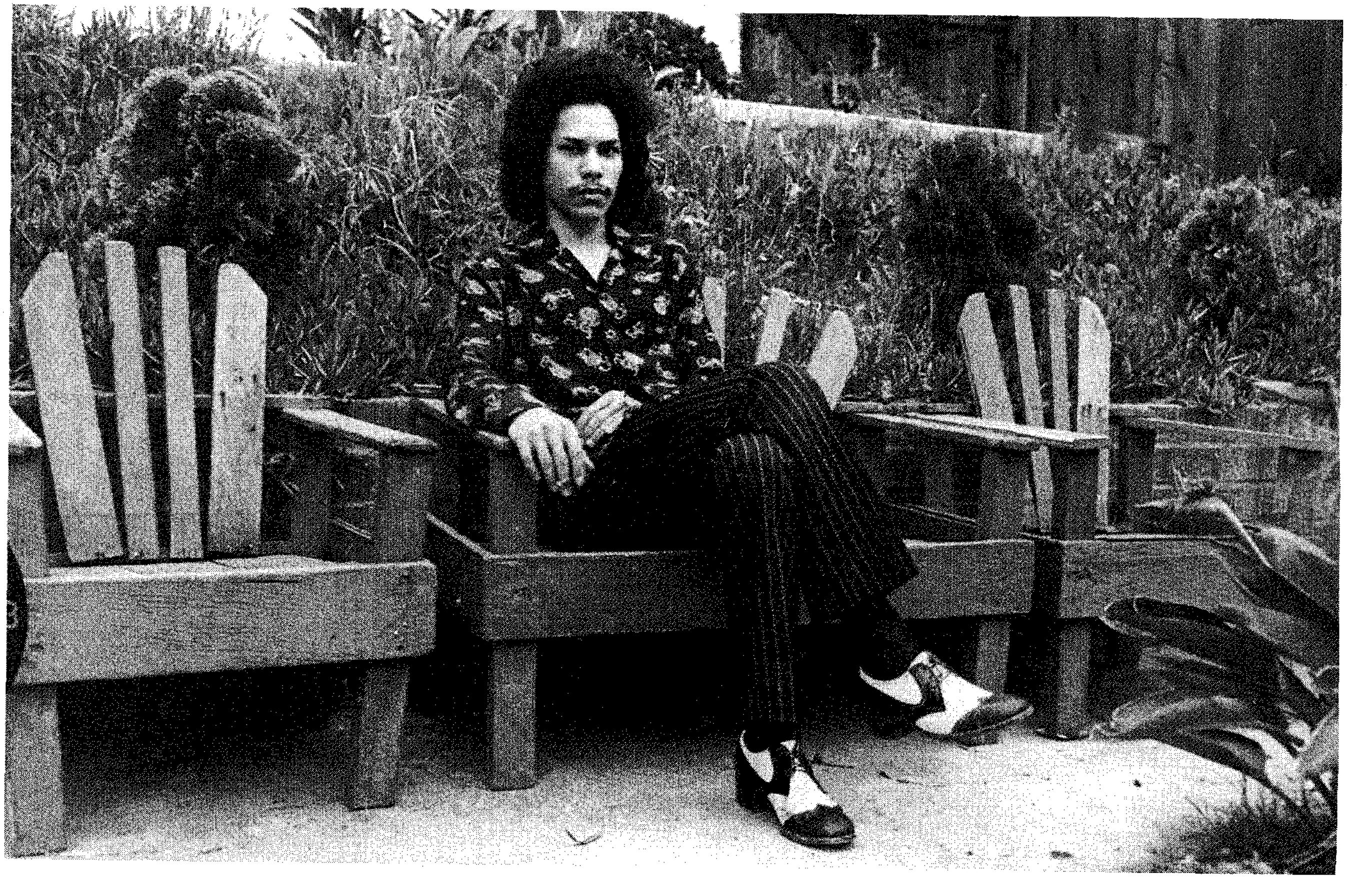
Shuggie Otis, now and then. Spearhead in the here and now.

BY BEN GREENMAN

While loitering in a large Manhattan record store recently, I saw a young man showing off for a young woman. He was standing near her, not near enough to alarm her but just near enough to earn her notice, and performing a short work entitled "Watch Me as I Decide What Record to Buy." The young man's hand hovered over the new Black Crowes record and moved on (too predictable, presumably), then went by Stevie Nicks (too fey) and Eden's Crush (he was a young man, not an eleven-year-old girl). It stopped at "Inspiration Information," the new record by Shuggie Otis. He may or may not have known of Otis, may or may not have read about him in a magazine or seen him on television. But the record, with its slight scent of mystery and its striking cover art—a blocky tangerine-and-cherry portrait of the artist—had just the right mixture of avant-garde charge and retro cool. The young man curled the CD approvingly into his biceps, flashed a smile at the young woman, and went to the cashier.

What awaited him—other than the satisfaction of remembering that the young woman had smiled back—was a set of seductive, occasionally sublime funk songs, including "Strawberry Letter 23," a slice of psychedelic soul taken to the top of the charts by the Brothers Johnson, in 1977. But "Inspiration Information" also conceals a surprise. Despite the 2001 copyright date, and despite the fact that it appeared in stores in March with slick new packaging, this is not a contemporary record but a collection of songs recorded decades ago. "Strawberry Letter 23," for example, is not a cover version at all but the original, written and recorded by Otis back in 1971, when he was only seventeen.

Even as a teen-ager, Shuggie was well acquainted with the spotlight. His father, the bandleader and radio personality Johnny Otis, was a prime mover in the glory days of R. & B.—a dapper operator responsible for launching the careers of such vocalists as Big Mama Thornton, Little Richard, and Etta James. Otis himself was Greek-American, born John Veliotes, but he changed his name to mask his background. Shuggie, born John, Jr., went to work in the family store at the age of fourteen, playing guitar in his father's band; he wore dark glasses and painted on a false mustache to pass as an adult. Soon enough, he struck out on his own, with solo albums that included "Freedom Flight," in 1971, and the original "Inspiration Information," in 1974. (The new release actually comprises nine tracks from the 1974 album, and four, including "Strawberry Letter 23," from "Freedom Flight.") A year later, Otis



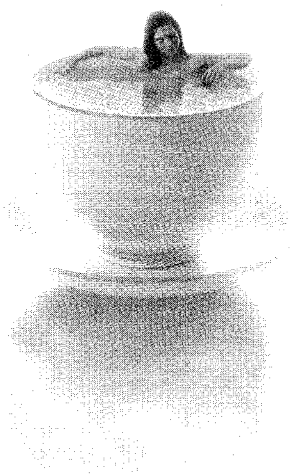
Otis in 1974: he articulated a funk aesthetic that plays better today than it did at the height of his career.

attracted the attention of the Rolling Stones, who were regrouping after the departure of Mick Taylor, their lead guitarist, and making a move toward soul music. They had already hired the organist Billy Preston, and he was charged with calling Otis to offer him a spot with the Stones. Otis declined. In the twenty-five years since, he has been content to tour the West Coast, sometimes with a small band, sometimes with his father, and to stay out of studios.

The release of the revamped "Inspiration Information" has revived Otis's career. Not only has he received glowing reviews in almost every major music publication; he has also hit the talk-show circuit, and hit it hard—in one week in May, he appeared on Conan O'Brien's show on a Tuesday night and David Letterman's on Friday. And the publicity blitz is working. After more than two decades of invisibility, Otis has popped up on the charts again.

What brought Shuggie Otis back? The simple answer is Otis's record label, Luaka Bop, which was founded by David Byrne and has made a habit of bringing idiosyncratic guests to the pop-music party, from the Brazilian folk eccentric Tom Zé to the African vocal ensemble Zap Mama. But it took more than Luaka Bop to stage a resurrection. It took neo-soul. By the early eighties, black pop was hurting, unless your name was Michael Jackson or Prince, and the late-eighties explosions in hip-hop and honeyed four-part harmonies did nothing to revive soul music. In the last few years, though, artists such as Macy Gray, D'Angelo, and Erykah Badu have drawn upon the sound and the spirit of early-seventies soul and funk with considerable commercial success.

Perhaps it's not fair to suggest that Luaka Bop is trying to foist "Inspiration Information" off on an unsuspecting public as a new neo-soul album. But Otis in 2001 does benefit from the failure of Otis in 1971 and 1974. If he had become better known, the function of the new edition would be principally to feed the nostalgia for those years: 1971 was for funk, after all, what 1922 was for modernist literature. Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" was released in June. Sly and the Family Stone's answer, "There's a Riot Goin' On," appeared five months later. Between them came canonical documents from Curtis Mayfield ("Roots"), Funkadelic ("Maggot Brain"),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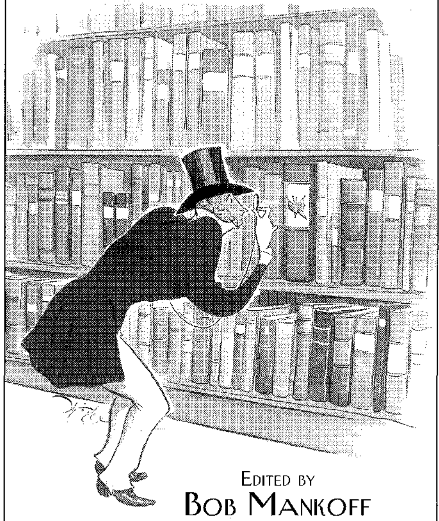
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and Isaac Hayes ("Shaft")—and, of course, Otis's "Freedom Flight." The "Inspiration Information" rerelease works because it equivocates between the past and the present: it's plausible both as a rediscovered funk artifact and as a specimen of twenty-first-century neo-soul.

But the album is too strong to be written off as a bait and switch. The first five songs—"Inspiration Information," "Island Letter," "Sparkle City," "Aht Uh Mi Hed," and "Happy House"—articulate a funk aesthetic as captivating as that of any other seventies superstar. Otis's vocals, callow and sweet, are a perfect counterpoint to his spiky guitar work; his horn and string arrangements are irreproachable; and no one except Sly Stone experimented as much, or as fruitfully, with rhythm tracks, mixing drum machines and live percussion. Then, there's the remarkable virtuosity. Otis, presumably, has only two arms, yet it seems unlikely, since he is credited with guitar, bottleneck guitar, bass, organ, piano, tack piano, drums, and sleigh bells—sometimes all on the same track. The feral "Ice Cold Daydream" sounds like a studied update of Jimi Hendrix's molten blues, and "Happy House," a minute-long squib of positive thinking punctuated by trippy synthesizer swirls, could be the latest single from Prince or Beck. "Strawberry Letter 23" is still the standout, with prismatic lyrics ("In the garden, I see / West purples shower bells and tea / Orange birds and river cousins / Dressed in green") and a wordless, crooning chorus that manages to distill the ambrosia of a crush. Throughout, the album benefits from a marvellously clean production that hasn't dated a week, let alone thirty years.

But there's another reason this masquerade works. After a few spins of "Inspiration Information," you begin to realize that, back in 1971, Otis created a record that was not particularly responsive to 1971. Listen to Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," from the same year. "Crime is increasing," Gaye sang in his pained-angel falsetto, "Trigger-happy policing / Panic is spreading / God knows where we're heading." The most vital funk was not party music but social lament; War's "Slipping Into Darkness" was only the most forthrightly titled of dozens of records that made bleak poetry out of Vietnam and urban unrest. Otis was not exactly sunny—he had a fragility that bordered on melancholy—but he was insular and hermetic and emphatically apolitical; his music has timeless appeal because it never belonged to its time to begin with. He was also, upon closer inspection, not much of a songwriter. The instrumentals on "Inspiration Information"—five of them, one of which is nearly thirteen minutes long—seem like pages from the sketchbook of a brilliant but unfocussed art student. Perhaps that's not surprising, since Otis was as young then as Britney Spears is now. But these songs also seem like prodromes of a larger impotence. Otis's wispy innocence never evolves; he's as green in 1974 as in 1971, and you can't really make a case for greatness on the basis of a half-dozen topnotch songs and some inspired noodling. Like Jill Scott, Musiq Soulchild, or any number of other new neo-soul artists, he seems not only fresh but unripe.

It's hard to know if this recent rediscovery pleases Otis, or if his years in obscurity—liner notes refer obliquely to "health issues" that limited his output—pained him. On the Letterman stage, he was quiet and dignified, playing along with Paul Shaffer, and even obliging with a bit of "Strawberry Letter 23." At the end of the show, Letterman held up "Inspiration Information" and recommended it to his television audience, the same way he would any other record.

If some artists are content to remain silent for long stretches, others, like Michael Franti, the front man for the soul-hop collective Spearhead, want to say everything, all at once. The six-six Franti played basketball for San Francisco State University before joining up with the city's punk underground, and at least one habit from his hoop days remains with him—he likes to take plenty of shots. In the late eighties, he formed a polemical rap outfit called the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy; the group released only one record, full of articulate rage

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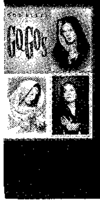

God Bless the Go-Go's in stores May 15th. Featuring the hit song "Unforgiven."

and laughably prolix song titles ("Television, the Drug of the Nation," "Everyday Life Has Become a Health Risk"). Spearhead, his next group, offered a more stylish ride: there was still political content, but it was vaguer, and the songs required Franti to sing, in a wonderfully buttery bass. With "Stay Human," Spearhead's third record, Franti dips even more deeply into the well of the seventies.

The album opens with "Oh My God," which wraps a sinuous chorus around spirited, densely conspiratorial verses—Franti spins theories about judicial corruption, cloning, and even Princess Diana ("This ain't no cartoon, no one slips on bananas / You really think that that car killed Diana?"). Elsewhere, Franti advocates a takeover of broadcast media ("Rock the Nation") and calls for a renewal of grassroots activism ("Listener Supported"). It wouldn't be accurate to say that the political messages are subtexts—the lyrics are too emphatic for that—but they go down easy. "Sometimes," for example, tackles police brutality, homelessness, and poverty, but with such a cheerful piano riff that what endures is the hopeful chorus: "Sometimes I feel like I could do anything."

Perhaps wary of blissing out listeners, Franti has connected his songs with a tissue of skits that tell the story of Sister Fatima, a neighborhood activist who is convicted of murdering a "business couple," whatever that is, and sentenced to die. The governor, voiced by the actor Woody Harrelson, seems to be using the execution for political juice. Franti is no dramatist, and the Sister Fatima subplot is not good drama; in the end, it careers at least two steps beyond plausibility, and what you learn isn't how to probe a government's motives but how to use the program function on your CD player to skip over the talky parts. But every time a bewitching ballad like "Love'll Set Me Free" appears, all is forgiven.

When he was a Disposable Hero of Hiphoprisy, Franti wrote a song that wondered what would happen "if ever I stop thinking about music and politics," and for more than a decade he hasn't. But Franti's determination seems futile. The wiser course is the one that consigned Shuggie Otis to oblivion three decades ago and resurrected him last March; sometimes the best way to write about the world around you is not to write about it at all. ♦

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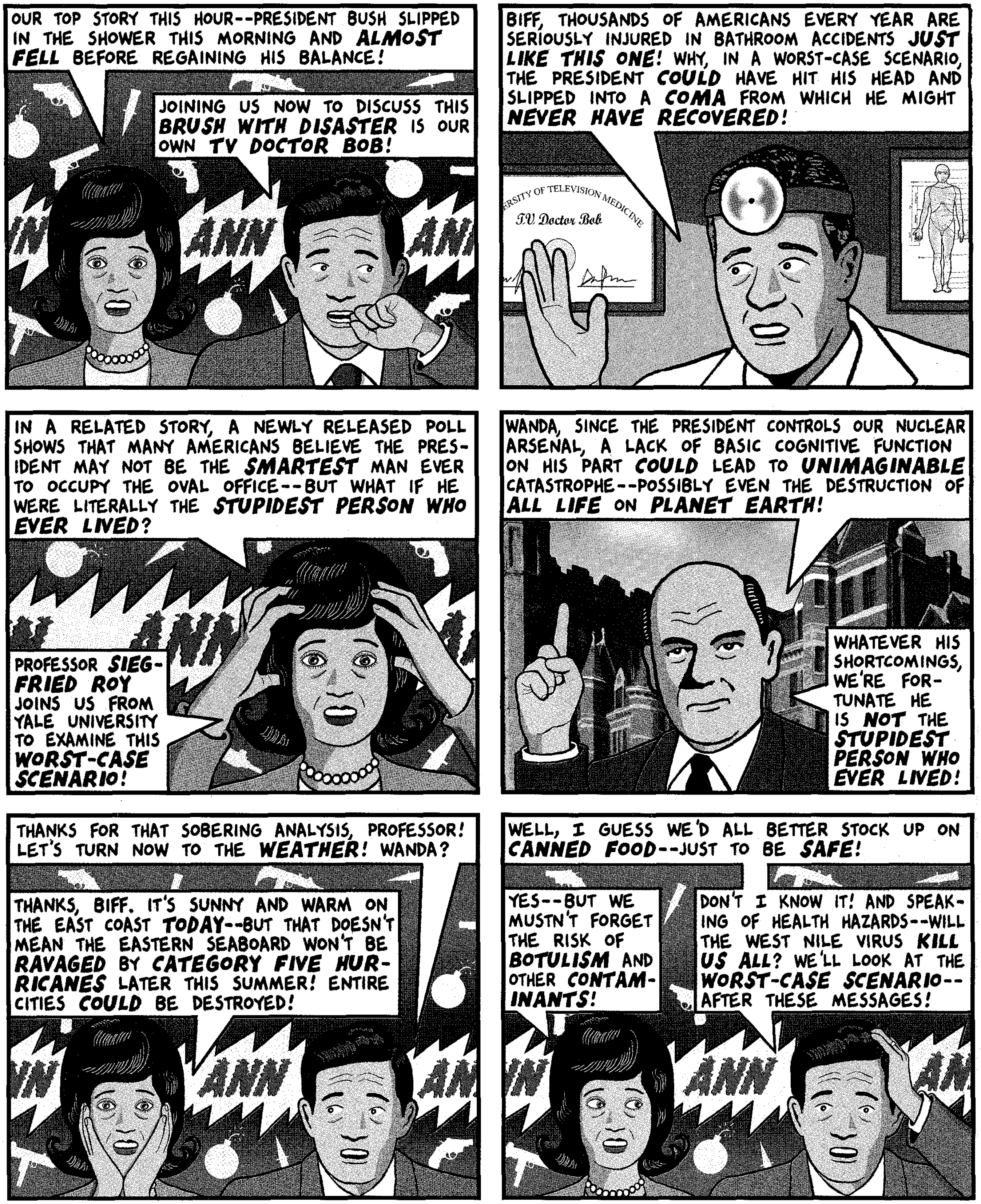
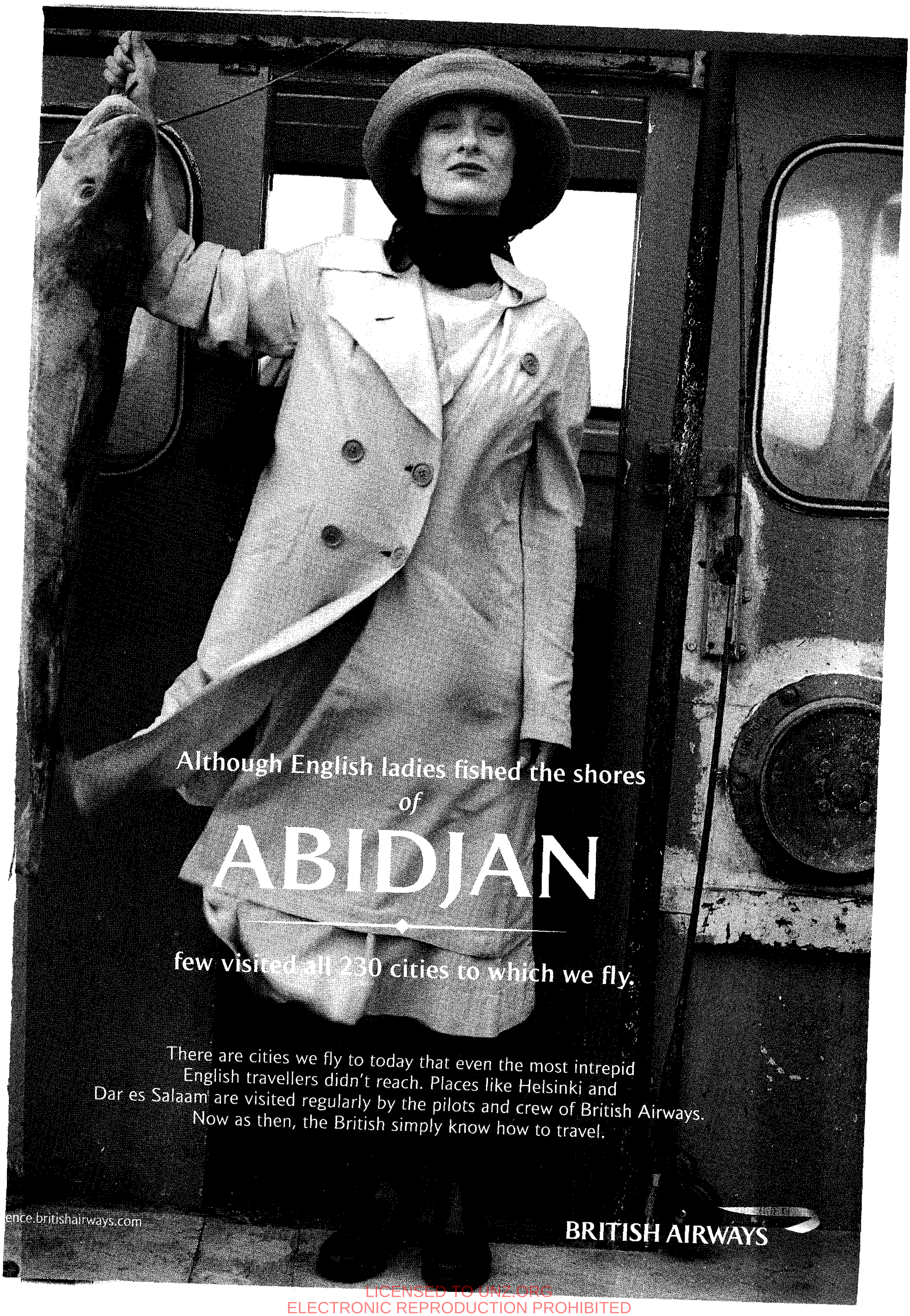
THE BACK PAGE BY TOM TOMORROW

THE ALARMIST NEWS NETWORK

WORST-CASE SCENARIOS--AROUND THE CLOCK!


OUR TOP STORY THIS HOUR--PRESIDENT BUSH SLIPPED IN THE SHOWER THIS MORNING AND ALMOST FELL BEFORE REGAINING HIS BALANCE!
JOINING US NOW TO DISCUSS THIS BRUSH WITH DISASTER IS OUR OWN TV DOCTOR BOB!
ANN
BIFF, THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS EVERY YEAR ARE SERIOUSLY INJURED IN BATHROOM ACCIDENTS JUST LIKE THIS ONE! WHY, IN A WORST-CASE SCENARIO, THE PRESIDENT COULD HAVE HIT HIS HEAD AND SLIPPED INTO A COMA FROM WHICH HE MIGHT NEVER HAVE RECOVERED!
RSITY OF TELEVISION MEDICINE
T.V. Doctor Bob
IN A RELATED STORY, A NEWLY RELEASED POLL SHOWS THAT MANY AMERICANS BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT MAY NOT BE THE SMARTEST MAN EVER TO OCCUPY THE OVAL OFFICE--BUT WHAT IF HE WERE LITERALLY THE STUPIDEST PERSON WHO EVER LIVED?
PROFESSOR SIEGFRIED ROY JOINS US FROM YALE UNIVERSITY TO EXAMINE THIS WORST-CASE SCENARIO!
WANDA, SINCE THE PRESIDENT CONTROLS OUR NUCLEAR ARSENAL, A LACK OF BASIC COGNITIVE FUNCTION ON HIS PART COULD LEAD TO UNIMAGINABLE CATASTROPHE--POSSIBLY EVEN THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL LIFE ON PLANET EARTH!
WHATEVER HIS SHORTCOMINGS, WE'RE FORTUNATE HE IS NOT THE STUPIDEST PERSON WHO EVER LIVED!
THANKS FOR THAT SOBERING ANALYSIS, PROFESSOR! LET'S TURN NOW TO THE WEATHER! WANDA?
THANKS, BIFF. IT'S SUNNY AND WARM ON THE EAST COAST TODAY--BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE EASTERN SEABOARD WON'T BE RAVAGED BY CATEGORY FIVE HURRICANES LATER THIS SUMMER! ENTIRE CITIES COULD BE DESTROYED!
WELL, I GUESS WE'D ALL BETTER STOCK UP ON CANNED FOOD--JUST TO BE SAFE!
YES--BUT WE MUSTN'T FORGET THE RISK OF BOTULISM AND OTHER CONTAMINANTS!
DON'T I KNOW IT! AND SPEAKING OF HEALTH HAZARDS--WILL THE WEST NILE VIRUS KILL US ALL? WE'LL LOOK AT THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO--AFTER THESE MESSAGES!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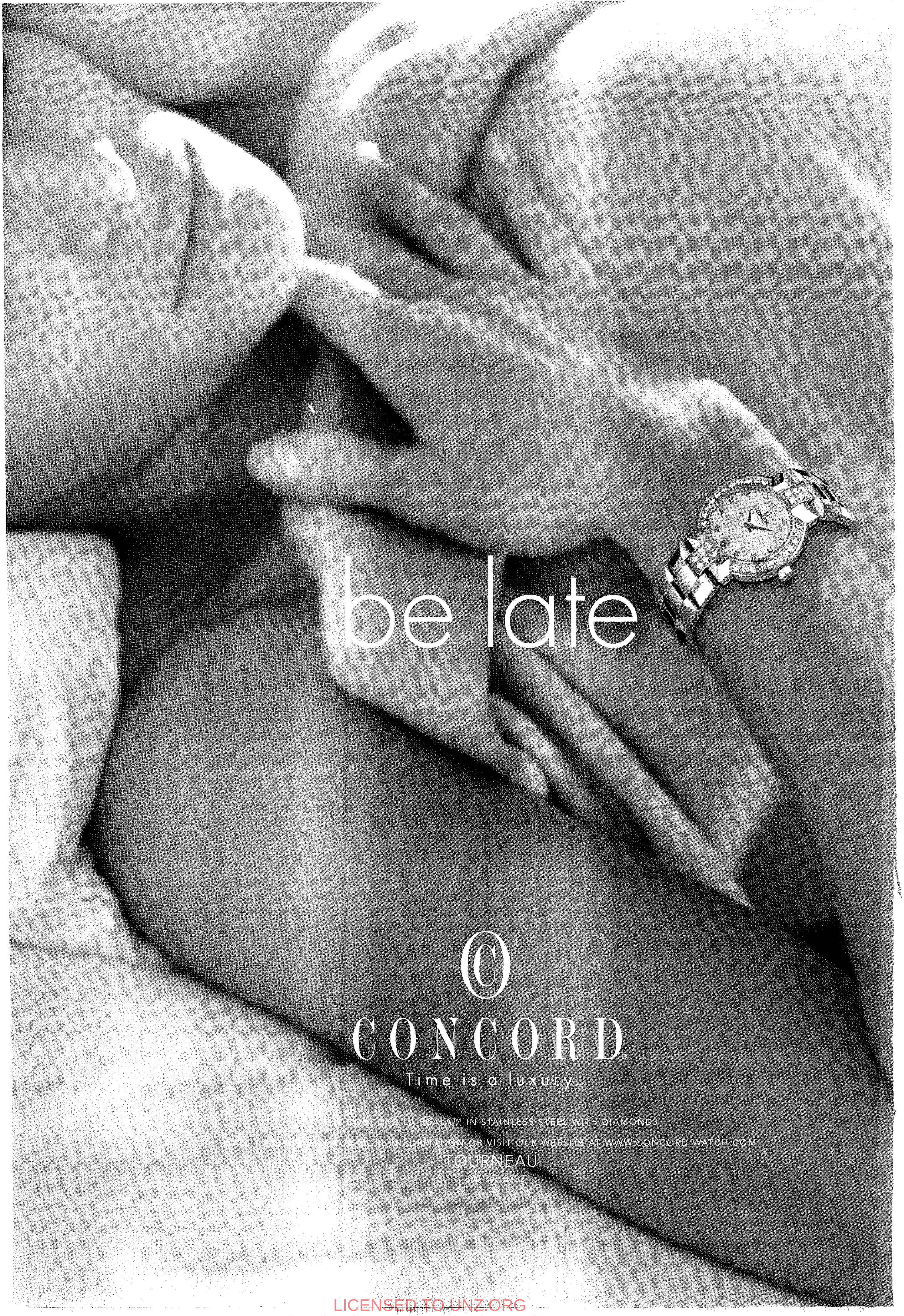
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